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# The Anthropologie effect

Nichole R. Staker  
*Iowa State University*

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**The anthropologie effect**

by

**Nichole R. Staker**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Program of Study Committee:

Fred Malven, Major Professor

Lori Brunner-Stone

Sara Marcketti

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2015



## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to all of the incredibly talented people I had the great fortune of working with during my career at Anthropologie. Ms. Debbie Bird you will always be that motivating voice in my head. Thank you for inspiring me every day with an incomparable creative vision and passion for making the unimaginable possible. I would also like to thank Professor Lee Cagley for sharing your incredible wisdom and talent over the years. You are a true gift to the Interior Design profession and one of the best human beings I know.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the phenomenon of lifestyle retail. How it's accomplished in today's consumer driven landscape? And, more importantly, how its practice can assist brick and mortar retailers in driving consumer behavior.

Further, we will discuss the principal strategies that guide this distinctive business application. We will look at brands through the prism of both: The Experience Economy and Sensory Branding to determine what structural tenants, processes and guidelines are practiced to build a memorable lifestyle retail experience.

The final component to the research is a proposed solution for independent retailers. In it, we will discuss the principles of lifestyle retail and how changing the physical environment can transform the customer experience and thus positively affect overall business performance.

This study utilizes: Literature Review, Case Study and Content Analysis to explore the application of lifestyle retail within the construct of today's consumer marketplace. Data was collected from all aforementioned methodologies.



## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Our world has become a dynamic consumer culture. However today's brands find themselves faced with the growing question of how to survive within a retail culture that is becoming increasingly obscure. With the global reach of the Internet and the booming success of mobile commerce, the retail industry, the most significant economic industry in the second half of the 1900s<sup>1</sup> finds itself in decline.

Since the Great US recession (2007-2009) personal consumption expenditures have actually grown by \$1 billion however the retail sector has lost nearly 60,000 jobs in that same time.<sup>2</sup> The problem for brick and mortar retailers is consumers continue to buy but they are not buying from them. With the ruthless efficiency of warehouse discount stores like Walmart and the online retail giant Amazon the manner of consumer consumption has changed. This shift in consumer buying trends has left traditional brick and mortar retailers asking themselves: is a physical retail space relevant and how do we make them relevant if consumers have the convenience of a laptop and no requirement to travel to have their needs met?

This research proposes that for brick and mortar retailers to succeed in today's economy they must change the way they do business by developing an authentic brand experience that they can sell to consumers. What this means is brands must provide a memorable shopping experience that fully connects with their customers on a personal level. Companies across the retail spectrum can no longer simply sell goods, rather, they

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<sup>1</sup> See Derek Thompson's *Where Did All the Retail Jobs Go?* for an insightful analysis of

<sup>2</sup> See Derek Thompson's *Where Did All the Retail Jobs Go?* for an insightful analysis of this trend.

must develop their own authentic identity and sell the experience of that identity, their lifestyle, to consumers in order to stay a foot in the current marketplace.

The most successful consumer brands do this innately. Consider for a moment: *Ralph Lauren, Apple, and Anthropologie*. Each of these brands is distinctive. You hear their name and you can instantly picture their lifestyle, their products-- their image. These brands have discovered and developed their own authentic identity. And they have taken their distinguishing identity and embedded it into every vertical of their business. More specifically, they have branded their lifestyle and effectively communicated, reinforced and sold it to consumers, thus separating themselves from their more traditional, retail competition.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The Experience Economy

In the beginning investigations into the Lifestyle Retail phenomenon, research studied Gilmore and Pine's ground-breaking article, *Welcome To The Experience Economy* (1998). In it the authors, in essence, equated the history of economic progress to the evolution of the birthday cake. The following is an abbreviated summation of this analogy:

During the Agrarian Economy, mothers commonly baked birthday cakes from scratch, mixing together basic commodities like sugar, eggs and flour to create a celebratory birthday offering for their families. As the Agrarian Economies largely began disappearing during the Industrial Economy the experience of baking a cake started to evolve. With the advent of companies like Betty Crocker a mother's baking process became streamlined. They no longer had to forage for commodities; rather, all of the commodities came conveniently premixed together in a store- bought box. When we move forward into the Service Economy, busy mothers started removing themselves from the kitchen entirely and began ordering cakes from their local bakeries. This significant shift in the actual process of birthday cake production brings us to our current day Experience Economy where today's parents are neither making the cake nor throwing the party. Instead, mothers, and fathers alike are spending money to "outsource" not only the baking of the cake but also the hosting of the entire birthday party experience.

The importance of Gilmore and Pine's analogy to this research is that the cake itself is a tangible metaphor for the retail economy. More specifically, for many years experiences were traditionally grouped together in the same category with services: the action of a mother baking a cake and the cake itself were all part of the same end offering. However, in today's environment, we are seeing experiences as desired economic offerings in their own right. So what began as a mother making a cake has transformed into the purchasing and consumption of an entire birthday experience.

This study suggests that the correlation between the birthday cake and a consumer product, such as a tee shirt, is one and the same. For example, to purchase a tee shirt prior to the economic recession of 2007, consumers would likely go to the mall and buy a tee shirt from their favorite retailer. This was predictable consumer behavior. However, as the economy recovered and the Internet became mercilessly efficient at meeting consumers buying needs the once predictable act of driving to the mall to buy a tee shirt became less guaranteed.

As today's consumers desire both efficiency and engagement the question facing brick and mortar retailers is consumer motivation. How can they motivate customers to come back into their stores? Research proposes that the answer lies within the actual experience of the physical environment. Jones, Reynolds, and Arnold<sup>3</sup> proposed the experiential benefits of the shopping experience itself is significantly impactful on a customer's overall satisfaction and possesses the ability to create the anticipation of

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<sup>3</sup> See Jones, Reynolds, and Arnold for a detailed analysis of the experiential benefits of the experience-shopping trend.

future shopping experiences. Babin, Darden, and Griffin<sup>4</sup> proposed that the actual process of purchasing a product is experiential in nature. Thus, the hypothesis and the practical application thereof seem to converge: To lure back today's consumers retailers can no longer operate in the traditional business vertical of solely selling products. Today's retailers must construct a memorable shopping experience that creates desire, entertains or represents a coveted lifestyle for consumers. Candi, Beltagui, and Riedel suggest businesses that augment their products with an experience typically outperform those that do not. They go on to propose that although one might expect the additional cost of a staged retail experience to impact profitability negatively, such negative impact is often offset by the benefits of repeat customers and consumer loyalty. In fact, by providing customers with an extraordinary shopping experience retailers can in fact gain a competitive advantage over their traditional retail competitors. This is significant as it signals a tangible resolution that brick and mortar retailers can explore in determining how to survive the current market shift.

### **Defining the Lifestyle Retail Experience**

The true essence of experience, or lifestyle, retail is when a company connects personally with its customer and communicates its vision, through product, physical environment, and customer experience, as an identifiable and desirable lifestyle. Successful lifestyle retailers are those who are able to convince their target consumer that products bearing the hallmark of their particular brand reinforce the consumer's

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<sup>4</sup> See Babin, Darden, and Griffin for a detailed analysis of the experiential benefits of the experience-shopping trend.

societal identity.<sup>5</sup> When done effectively a lifestyle retailer elicits an emotion from the consumer, that emotion then motivates the consumer to desire the brand's identity and that pursuit leads to the complete brand emersion of the consumer into the marketed lifestyle. It is having the birthday cake and the birthday party all wrapped up with a shiny red bow.

To reinforce this theory research conducted a popular media scan to identify the current and emerging cultural philosophies surrounding the retail industry. More specifically to examine how consumers both define, and relate to, the emerging lifestyle retail phenomenon. The results were as follows:

#### Lifestyle retail: brand experience

For a retail experience to feel extraordinary it has to deliver on at least 5 different elements of the shopping experience simultaneously:

- Engagement
- Building connections
- Loyalty
- Unique store design
- Engaging atmosphere
- Exceptional product quality
- Make customers feel special
- Give customers a deal or special incentive
- Deliver executional excellence

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<sup>5</sup> See Jacob Breinholt's *Lifestyle Brands: What are they, and why do we want them so bad?* on SoJones for an insightful analysis of this trend.

### Lifestyle retail: the physical store experience

Customers define a successful lifestyle retailer as one who utilizes engaging physical environments and thoughtful customer experiences to connect with their consumer base.

- Experience design
- Immersive environment (theater)
- Unique interior design

### Traditional retail: brand experience

Customers define a traditional retailer as one who provides affordable product and a convenient shopping experience.

- Affordability
- Attainability
- Convenience
- Familiarity
- Product focus

### Challenges that face traditional retailers

A unique brand experience is the largest differential between lifestyle and traditional retailers, and thus the greatest challenge facing traditional retailers.

- Originality
- Adventure
- Unique

- Memorable
- Empathy
- Evolve to stay relevant

In a survey conducted by Wharton's Jay H. Baker Retailing Initiative, in conjunction with Verde and the Retail Council of Canada, 1,006 shoppers in the United States and Canada were asked the following question: "Can you think of a shopping experience that you had in the past six months or so that was especially great, in that the experience created delight and surprise for you in any way?" Results were used to examine how retailers can create an extraordinary experience for shoppers.

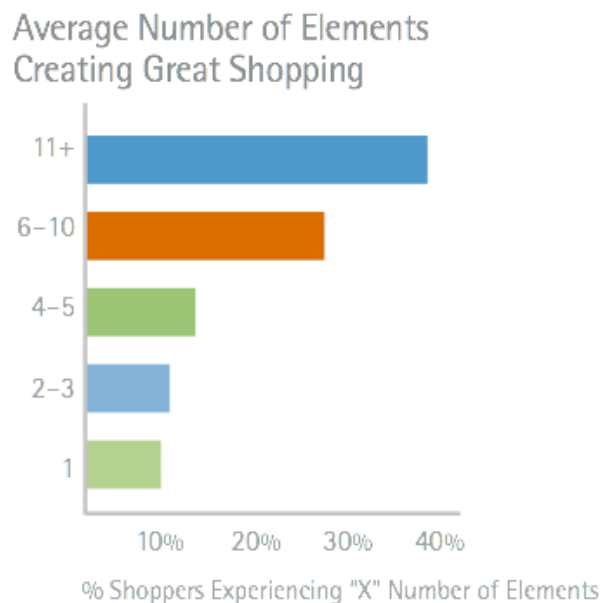
Survey results found respondents defined a great retail experience as possessing at least 10 key elements:

1. Unique store design
2. Engaging atmosphere
3. Attentive employees
4. Knowledgeable employees
5. Exceptional product quality
6. Personal connection with customers
7. Experience of adventure or exploration
8. Immersive environment
9. Unique interior design
10. Expediting
11. Problem recovery



As these findings support the research hypothesis they also highlight an important variable in that the hierarchy of important defining elements of an extraordinary retail experience varied among individual shoppers based on age, gender and nationality of shoppers. For instance younger consumers, aged 18 to 30, were most likely to recall having a great shopping experience where those over age 50 were more likely to mention store employees who were courteous, genuine and caring.

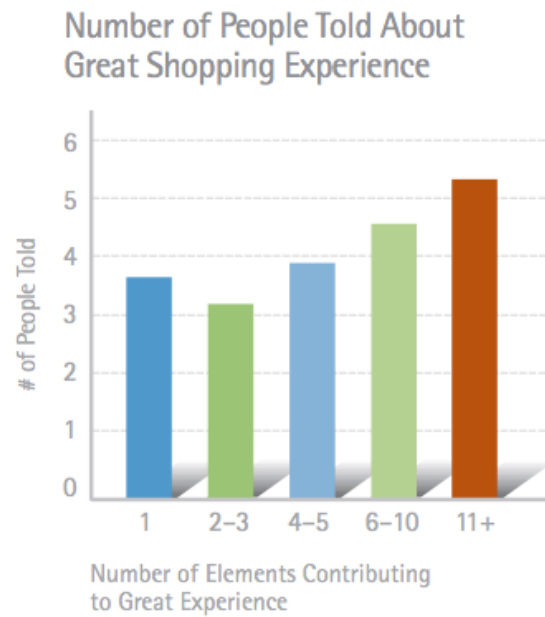
However, the results also indicate that regardless of age, gender or nationality four in five shoppers will tell an average of three other people about a wow experience. This suggests that brand experience and customer engagement are strongest drivers of brand loyalty at 63%: these categories include store design, atmosphere and store employee behavior.



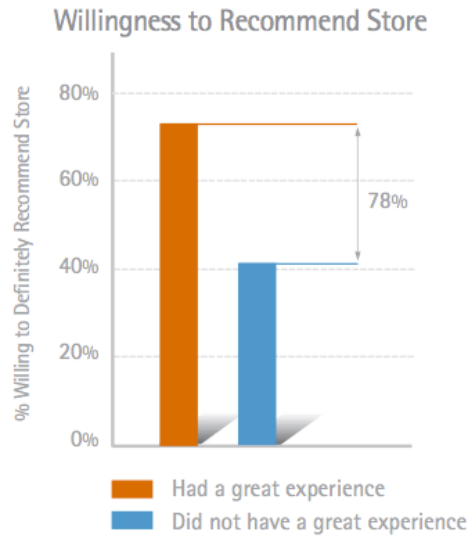
***Figure 1. Average Number of Elements Creating a Great Shopping Trip***



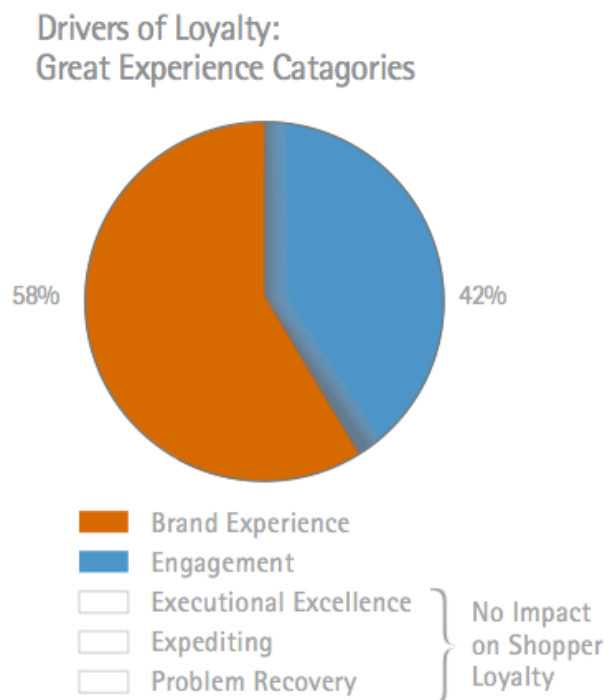
**Figure 2. Intent to Return to Store**



**Figure 3. Number of People Told About a Great Shopping Experience**



*Figure 4. Willingness to Recommend Store*



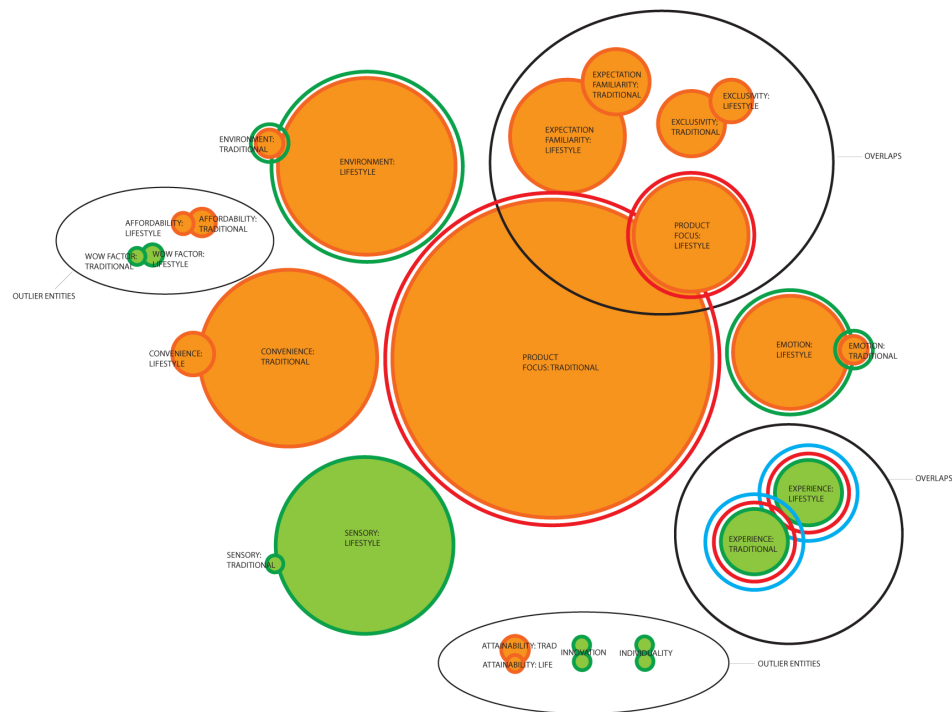
*Figure 5. Drivers of Loyalty: Great Experience Categories*

Based on the collected data, research developed a Venn Diagram to analyze the overlaps between consumer associations of both the lifestyle and traditional retail platforms. The diagram indicates entities and commonalities between traditional and lifestyle retail platforms while the perimeter outliers represent entities that are not members of the common cluster.

#### Entities for grouping

Research used the 13 most frequently used descriptive words from the popular media scan and the Wharton survey as the grouping entities:

- Affordability
- Attainability
- Convenience
- Emotion
- Environment
- Exclusivity
- Experience
- Familiarity
- Individuality
- Innovation
- product focus
- sensory
- wow factor



**Figure 6. Venn Diagram of Traditional and Lifestyle Retail Environments**

Research found that the top three (3) common emotions/elements/characteristic “overlaps” that consumers associated with both traditional and lifestyle retail environments are as follows:

1. Product Focus
2. Familiarity
3. Experience

Additional overlap occurred, although less significantly, for: exclusivity, convenience, and environment.

These overlaps indicate that although “product focus”, “experience”, and “familiarity” each hold different degrees of association with consumer perceptions of both lifestyle retail and traditional retail environments - these three characteristics were found important to both retail environments regardless of their retail application. And although these findings may complicate a retailer’s undertaking when determining what specific attributes or elements to focus on while constructing their physical environments, it does provide retailers with a generalized focus on what major elements affect overall customer satisfaction.

After investigating the elements that define both the traditional and the lifestyle shopping experience research focused on establishing the structural tenants of a lifestyle retail store. The focus of the subsequent research phase was to visually depict the organizational structure of a lifestyle retailer and identify where innovation opportunities reside within the lifestyle retail platform. The following are the proposed components of a lifestyle retail environment:

**Aspect A: store environment**

1. Merchandising: Floor Planning + Product Placement
2. Display: Primary + Secondary
3. Windows

**Aspect B: visual department**

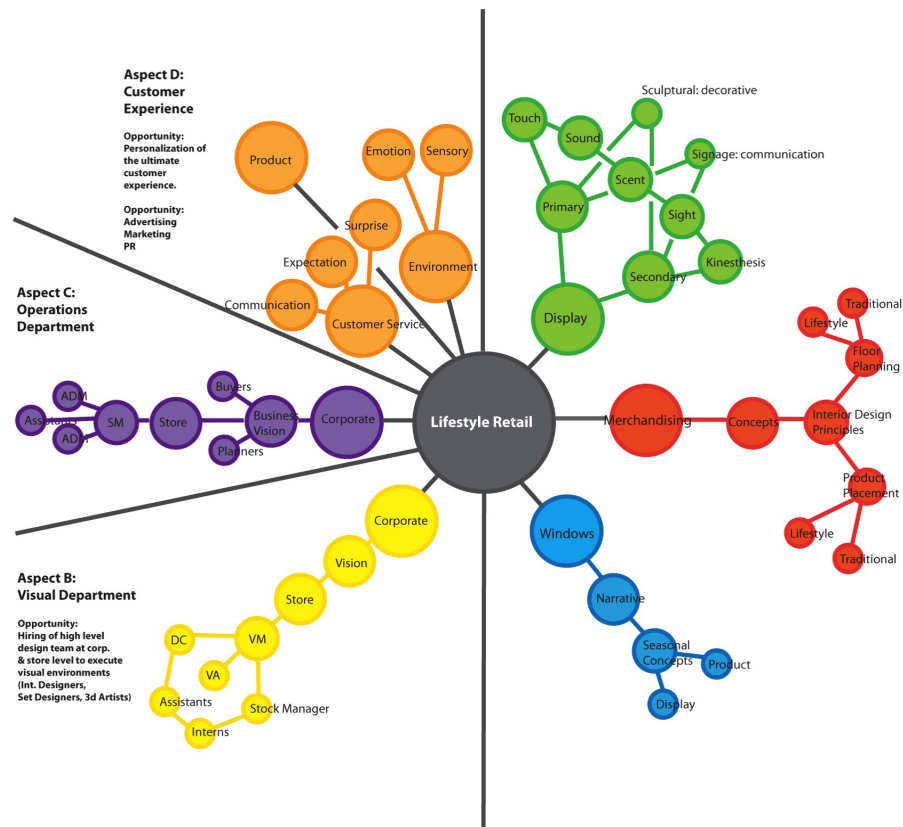
1. Corporate: Creative Vision
2. Store: Visual Manager
3. Store Support Team: Assistants + Interns

### Aspect C: operations department

1. Corporate: Business Vision
2. Store: Store Manager
3. Store Support Team: Assistants + Associates

### Aspect D: customer experience

1. Customer Service: Communication + Delivery of Expectation
2. Environment: Sensory + Emotional Response



*Figure 7. Opportunity Mind Map*

## **Analysis**

Analysis finds the store environment and customer experience to be the single most important areas within a lifestyle retail experience that possess significant differential opportunities for Lifestyle retail stores as compared to Traditional retail stores. Further, each of these aspects holds key opportunities that can distinguish lifestyle environments within a retail context by changing the way brands communicate their message, or their vision, to the customer.

Additionally, the success of a lifestyle retailer originates from their ability to connect personally with the customer and communicate their vision as an identifiable lifestyle. As consumers begin to desire a special, more unique retail capability businesses must respond by designing engaging experiences for and selling a branded lifestyle to their consumers. And it is through their use of inventive and experience-designed environments that they can successfully differentiate themselves from that of their competitors. Furthermore, by establishing the structural tenants of a lifestyle retail store research proposes a brand will lure back the retail shopper.

### Store environment

Customization: Store environment is the aspect of a retail store that is the most customizable for each, specific retail brand. Research finds that successful store environments frequently address or affect several of the following elements:

- Customer experience
- Emotion or emotional response
- Visual environment



- Communication
- Product focus
- Sensory experience/response

Differentiator: The store environment is where the VISUAL elements of lifestyle retail exist. This is the aspect that separates lifestyle retailers from traditional retailers.

- Display: Visual Communication and Decorative Installation both primary and secondary that uses sensory design as its guiding principle
- Merchandising: The arrangement of product within concepts on the retail floor. Product Placement can use both lifestyle and traditional techniques in the placement however merchandisers often utilize Interior Design Principles to create the floor plan and visual strategies.
- Windows: Store Front window displays that showcase product and reflect seasonal concepts. Lifestyle retailers frequently use display within the windows to create a narrative, or lifestyle experience.

Elements of a lifestyle retail environment: Research finds that the following elements commonly combine to differentiate a lifestyle retail environment from a traditional retail environment, in that these elements are frequently not addressed within the latter.

- Experience
- Vision
- Emotion
- Visual environment

- Empathy
- Exclusivity
- Exploration
- Individuality
- Innovation
- Wow factor

Challenges facing traditional retailers: In researching today's retail market, studies indicate that traditional retailers are facing the following challenges:

- Lack of originality
- Lack of adventure
- Lack of uniqueness
- Lack of empathy
- Unmemorable experience
- Can not evolve to stay relevant

### Customer experience

Personalization: The customer experience is the aspect of a retail store that a lifestyle brand can craft specifically for their target demographic, thus creating brand loyalty and return shoppers. Research finds that successful customer experiences frequently address or affect several of the following elements:

- Customer experience
- Customer service
- Emotion or emotional response
- Visual environment
- Communication
- Product focus
- Expectation achievement

### **Conclusion**

It has been a difficult decade for the retail industry. As the Internet continues to eat away at consumer market shares, retailers that have thrived for decades are finding their stores empty. Traditional brick and mortar retailers can no longer pull in the customers to sustain their business. Consumers who were once motivated by the desire to buy a tee shirt are now motivated by unique brands that offer engaging, inventive and extraordinary experiences. Research suggests that for brick and mortar retailers to survive in today's consumer-driven Experience Economy they must move away from the traditional business platform of solely selling product and into the business of selling a memorable shopping experience. Further, by creating a holistic brand experience that

strategically addresses: the customer experience, physical environment and the product, retailers will regain their ability to influence consumer behavior and drive customers back into their stores.

### Sensory Branding

Why consumers buy is the subject of Martin Lindstrom's 2005 *Brand Sense*. In it Lindstrom explores how our senses affect our overall purchasing behaviors and how those behaviors lead to lasting branding awareness. He goes on to propose that the most successful companies in the world differentiate themselves through a carefully planned sensory experience that integrates touch, taste, smell, sight and sound. Further, Lindstrom suggests that because of this branding strategy they are able to achieve lasting brand impressions and create a loyal brand following unattainable by companies who only engage consumers via sight or sound.

As human beings we experience nearly our entire understanding of the world via our senses yet traditional marketing has been, and largely remains, two-dimensional. Historically companies have focused on achieving a consistent and impactful visual presentation, possibly set to an audio soundtrack, to “effectively” brand themselves while disregarding consumers’ additional three senses. Case and point, in 2008 Lindstrom conducted a well-publicized study among *Starbucks* consumers asking them to identify what sensory associations they likened to the brand. The top two responses were: 1.) The sound of the grinding coffee beans 2.) The smell of sour milk. Interestingly enough,

shortly after the study was published, *Starbuck's* CEO Howard Schultz issued a company-wide directive to close down 7,100 stores for several hours to “tidy” things up.<sup>6</sup>

By addressing consumer sensory perceptions holistically research proposes that companies can build a connection between the consumer and their brands that generates an authenticity largely missing in most traditional retail experiences—thus entering the largely unexplored and impactful territory of sensory branding.

## **Sound**

The sound of a brand can influence consumers on both a subconscious and conscious level. It is a fundamental tool in establishing the mood of an environment or the atmosphere of a narrative. “Many elements of our everyday life are clearly associate with sounds. If we don’t hear them, we miss them. The sound of a brand adds to the perception of product quality and function. If removed, the perception is diluted.”<sup>7</sup> In essence, sound is a sense that is hard wired into our brains, thus making it an emotionally direct, powerful dimension that brands should not underestimate.

## **Sight**

Sight is the most powerful of the five senses. According to Geoff Crook, head of the sensory design research lab a Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, 83% of the information we retain is information that we have received visually.

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<sup>6</sup> See Martin Lindstorm’s *Brandsense* for an insightful analysis of sensory branding.

<sup>7</sup> On the element of sound in sensory branding, see Lindstorm’s pp105.

A distinctive product shape, design or the characteristic look of a brand's physical environment has the ability to establish immediate brand recognition among consumers.

### **Touch**

The weight of a remote, the feel of a *Coca-Cola* bottle, the scale of your cell phone – these are all characteristics that make brands and their products identifiable with consumers. How a brand feels has a lot to do with the quality we associate to the product. Or as Lindstorm suggests “the feel of a product is essential in forming the perception we have of the brand”.<sup>8</sup>

### **Smell**

If sight is the most powerful sense then smell might be the most persuasive. In fact, studies have shown that our moods can undergo a 40% improvement when exposed to a pleasant smell.<sup>9</sup> Consequently smell has the keen ability to alter a consumer's mood.

In 1988, Dr. H. A. Roth found a powerful connection between consumer perception and sensory experience. In his examination of shopping mall patrons he found that shoppers spent significantly more time in the mall during times in which a citrus scent was sprayed compared to when no scent was sprayed. This phenomenon is seen today in luxury hotels to car dealerships to children's toys. Spaces and products are being suffused with scent to evoke emotion and build a strong consumer-brand association.

### **Taste**

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<sup>8</sup> On the element of touch in sensory branding, see Lindstorm's pp 91.

<sup>9</sup> On the element of smell in sensory branding, see Lindstorm's pp 96.

Taste and smell are commonly linked in the sensory experience and often referred to as the chemical senses since both are able to sample the environment around them.<sup>10</sup> However in discussion of sensory branding it is possible to use aroma without the presence of taste though the inverse is virtually impossible. Thus the very nature of using taste to support a brand is quite limited.

## **Conclusion**

The fundamental goal of sensory branding is to establish a strong, emotional connection and long-lasting bond between brand and consumer. Research suggests that as sensory experiences trigger innate associations in consumers there exists a tangible branding platform for companies to achieve lasting brand association. Therefore sensory branding offers the potential to create resonate brand impressions and binding engagement between brand and consumer. Likewise, as the purpose of this research is to investigate the phenomenon of lifestyle retail, the discussion of sensory branding becomes a vital component in the big picture of creating a holistic brand experience for consumers.

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<sup>10</sup> On the element of taste in sensory branding, see Lindstorm's pp100.

### Developing Interior Space

As previously discussed, the shift in consumer buying trends has left many traditional brick and mortar retailers sitting dormant. It is the research hypothesis that these retailers must also shift the way they do business in an effort to succeed in today's economy. To do this they must develop a platform that draws consumers away from their computers and back into their stores. The proposed solution is retailers change the way they utilize their physical spaces. Research suggests brands that provide a memorable shopping experience, which fully connects with their customers, outperform those who operate under traditional retail tenants. And by utilizing their physical store environment as a platform to deliver an authentic brand experience these consumer-facing retailers position themselves as an experience driven brand; a lifestyle per se that consumers will covet and leave their computers to experience.

The concern that arises out of the proposed solution is many traditional retailers do not possess the knowledge of how to physically execute these dynamic environments. In short, they do not possess enough awareness of interior space or the designing of an interior environment to know what to do. They understand the problem and the end goal but lack the skill set to connect the dots. Thus, in order to effectively execute a lifestyle retail environment it is important that all those involved have a core understanding of Interior Design fundamentals.

### **Interior space**

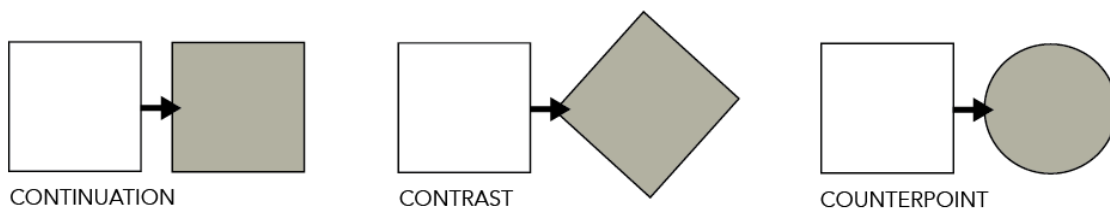
The primary influence of an interior space is a building's structure. And the architectural elements within that structure such as floors, walls and ceilings are what



establish an interior's physical space. Entrances, doors and window openings also instill architectural definition to an area. Together these elements provide a set of boundaries that separate one space from other adjoining interior spaces.

It is also possible to utilize non-fixed features such as partitions walls and suspended ceilings to establish boundaries and influence spatial perception. Where features like lighting, color, texture and pattern influence our awareness of a room's dimension.

What is important to recognize when planning an interior space is that every building has its own recognizable structural system, which molds and shapes its environment through the manipulation of the dominant and recessive figure ground relationship. And it is the relationship between elements within that articulates the spatial form. When organizing an interior one should be aware of both its architectural character and defining elements and choose to work with them (continue the architecture), modify them (contrast the architecture), or counterpoint against them entirely (deviate from the original architecture).



*Figure 8. Defining Space*

## Planning, layout & design

“Interior design is the planning, layout, and design of the interior spaces within buildings.”<sup>11</sup> To organize interior spaces designers arrange selected furnishings and fixtures into three-dimensional patterns according to practical, aesthetic and behavioral guidelines. Consequently these arrangements are *tools* that divide the areas within an interior space. For example a sofa and pair of flanking chairs afford a defined sense of enclosure to a space whereas a row of chairs can indicate a spatial pattern.

To layout a space designers often utilize a practice called space programming to properly allocate the space within an interior spaces. Space programming is an exercise that involves considering how to best layout the environment to best fit the living patterns, spatial requirements and needs of the user.

The steps of basic space planning are as follows:

1. Documentation: Document the existing or proposed space through dimensioned drawings (plans, sections, and interior elevations)
2. Analysis: Notate site conditions, openings, paths of suggested circulation, materials, significant architectural details, location of plumbing/electrical/mechanical fixtures and outlets, elements for reuse, possible areas for modification
3. Requirements:
  - Notate the spatial requirements such as required groupings of furniture, number of people serviced, etc.

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<sup>11</sup> (Ching & Binggel) 36.

- Notate the desired qualities of the space such as feeling, atmosphere, style, comfort, security, focus of space, color, acoustical environment, etc.
- Notate the desired relationships between areas within the space such as active areas, gathering spaces, circulation paths, rooms and adjacencies, rooms and the outside environment
- Notate the desired functions or intended usages of the space such as furniture groupings, clearances, visual privacy, flexibility, appropriate lighting, etc.

Whether you are planning an interior space within an existing structure or beginning with a new build, a space typically indicates how it can best be utilized. By utilizing a space planning program designers can clearly organize the intention of an interior and effectively shape its environment.

### **Design Vocabulary**

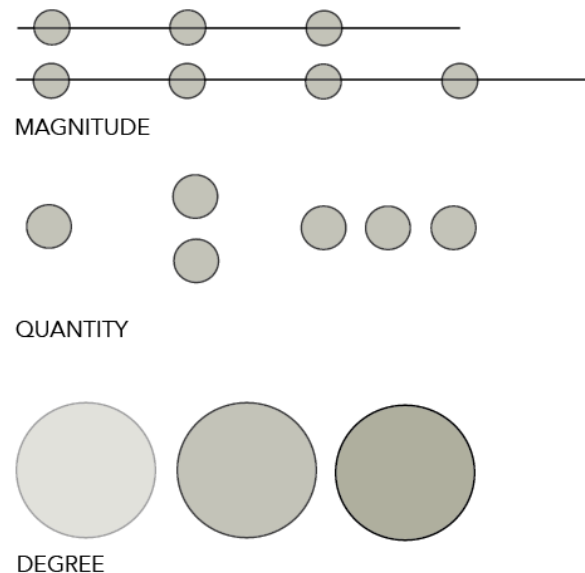
To create the aesthetic quality of a visual environment designers are often required to look beyond our normal process of perception, which is largely utilitarian in nature, and make more detailed evaluations. For example when we see a chair we recognize it as a chair because we know its historical function. However, when a designer looks at a chair they need to see the chair, then see its shape, size, proportion, color and texture. It is through the aesthetic perception of form that designers are able to shape how forms, and their aesthetic elements, relate and interact to one another within an interior space.

It is the selection of design elements and their arrangement within an interior that creates the visual relationship between objects within an enclosed space. The following design principles are guidelines to the ways elements can be arranged in space. By utilizing these principles designers are best able to establish a sense of visual order within an interior space while adapting to its envisioned use and functionality.

The following definitions of design elements on pages 36-40 are direct excerpts taken from *Interior Design Illustrated, Second Edition* by Francis D.K. Ching and Cory Bingeli:

### **Proportion**

Proportion refers to the relationship of one part to another or to the whole, or between one object and another. This relationship may be one of magnitude, quantity, or degree.<sup>12</sup>



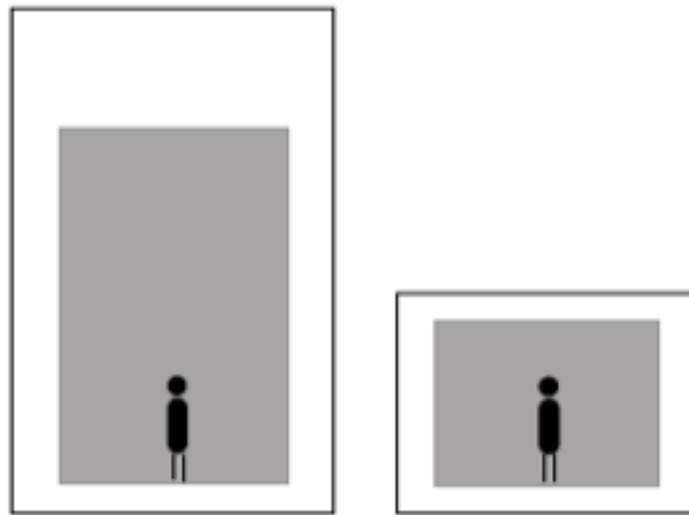
*Figure 9. Proportion*

<sup>12</sup> (Ching & Binggel) 121.

## Scale

Visual scale is the size relative to other objects in the environment or to the surrounding space.

Human scale is the feeling of smallness or bigness a space or an interior element gives us.<sup>13</sup>



*Figure 10. Scale*

## Balance

There are three types of visual balance: symmetrical, radial, and asymmetrical.

Symmetrical balance results from the arrangement of identical elements, corresponding in shape, size, and relative position, about a common line or axis. It is also known as axial or bilateral symmetry. Symmetrical balance most often

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<sup>13</sup> (Ching & Binggel) 126-127.

results in a quiet, reposed, and stable equilibrium that is readily apparent, especially when oriented on a vertical plane.

Radial balance results from the arrangement of elements about a center point. It produces a centralized composition that stresses the middle ground as a focal point.

Asymmetry is recognized as the lack of correspondence in size, shape, color, or relative position among the elements of a composition. Asymmetrical composition incorporates dissimilar elements.<sup>14</sup>

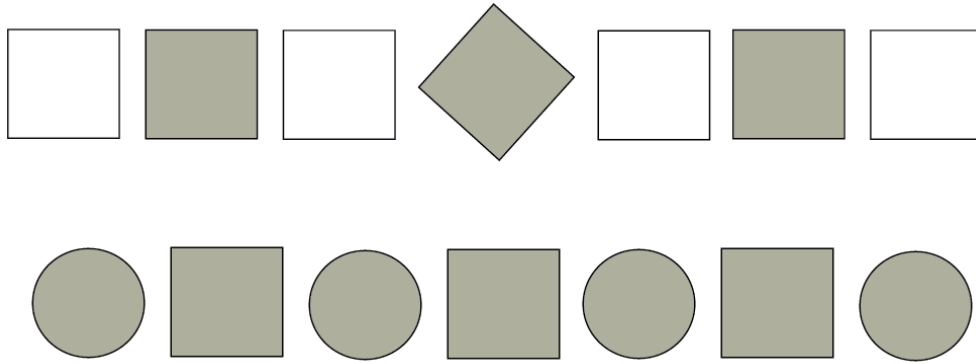
### **Harmony**

Harmony can be defined as consonance or the pleasing agreement of parts or combination of parts in a composition. While balance achieves unity through the careful arrangement of both similar and dissimilar elements, the principle of harmony involves the careful selection of elements that share a common trait or characteristic, such as shape, color, texture, or material. It is the repetition of a common trait that produces unity and visual harmony among the elements in an interior setting.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> (Ching & Binggel) 131-133.

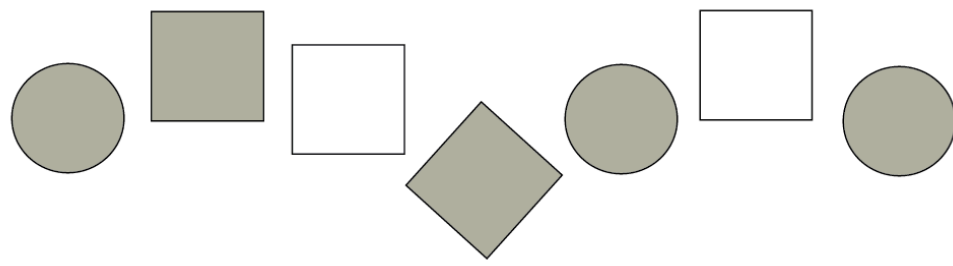
<sup>15</sup> (Ching & Binggel) 136.



*Figure 11. Harmony*

### Unity & Variety

Harmony, when carried too far in the use of elements with similar traits, can result in a unified but uninteresting composition. Variety, on the other hand, when carried to an extreme for the sake of interest can result in visual chaos. It is the careful and artistic tension between order and disorder – between unity and variety – that enlivens harmony and creates interest in an interior setting.<sup>16</sup>



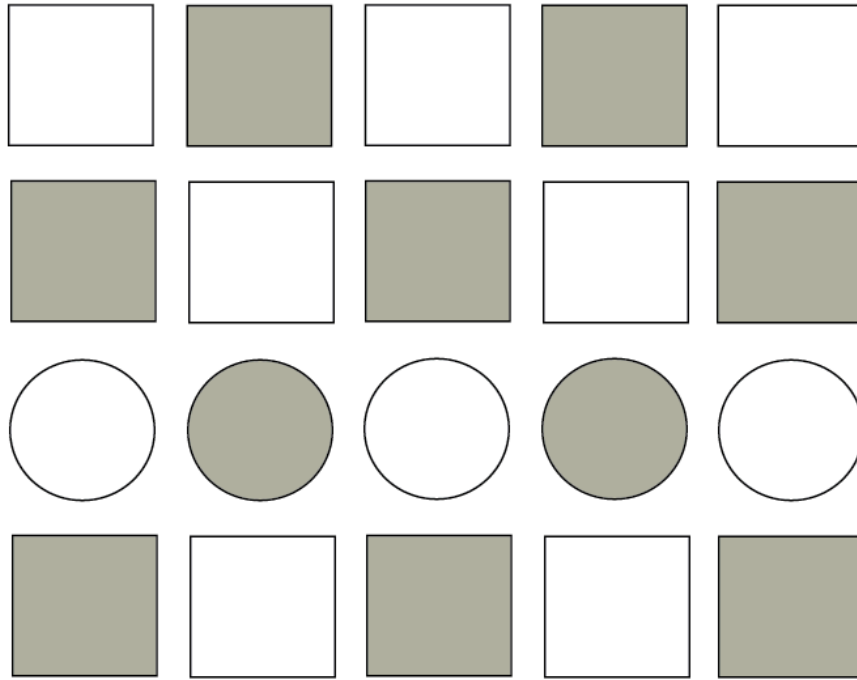
*Figure 12. Unity and Variety*

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<sup>16</sup> (Ching & Binggel) 137.

## Rhythm

The design principle of rhythm is based on the repetition of elements in space and time. This repetition not only creates visual unity but also induces a rhythmic continuity of movement that a viewer's eyes and mind can follow along a path, within a composition, or around a space.<sup>17</sup>



*Figure 13. Rhythm*

## Emphasis

The principle of emphasis assumes the coexistence of dominant and subordinate elements in the composition of an interior setting. A design without any dominant elements would be bland and monotonous. If there are too many assertive elements, the design would be cluttered and chaotic, detracting from what may be

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<sup>17</sup> (Ching & Binggel) 138.



important. Each part of a design should be given proper significance according to its degree of importance in the overall scheme.<sup>18</sup>

## **Conclusion**

As traditional retailers begin to expand their existing business platforms to include the execution of physically dynamic environments it is important that they possess a core understanding of Interior Design fundamentals in order to effectively plan environments that meet the needs of a changing consumer market. By utilizing these fundamental principles retailers will have a working knowledge of how to structure an interior space and be able to connect the dots from problem solving through to execution.

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<sup>18</sup> (Ching & Binggel) 142.

## CHAPTER 3

## CASE STUDY: THE ART OF ANTHROPOLOGIE

## Introduction

The American retailer, *Anthropologie*, is a high-end lifestyle brand owned by parent company *Urban Outfitters, Inc.* and is considered by many within the retail industry to be a trailblazer of the lifestyle branding phenomena. *Anthropologie* believes that the design of their unimaginable brand experience is the ultimate platform that sets them apart from their competitors.

*(Today Anthropologie has more than 175 retail locations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, as well as anthropologie.com, offering customers their signature identity worldwide )*

## Anthropologie History

In 1970 Richard Hayne and Scott Belair founded *Urban Outfitters*, an eccentric umbrella brand that housed several off-beat clothing and apartment-themed accessory labels targeted at the college-aged, urbanite. As the brand grew, Hayne and Belair parted ways with Hayne retaining creative control of the company. Hayne quickly recognized that while the Urban brand was growing in popularity it was their private label merchandise that generally yielded the highest profit margins not their brand name merchandise.

To explore his observation Hayne formed a wholesale division of *Urban Outfitters* in 1984 to design, produce, and sell its own product line. By 1990, the wholesale division housed three private labels each targeting a different consumer demographic: Ecote, Free People, and Anthropologie. Out of the three labels, it was Anthropologie's target demographic, young women's casual wear, which serendipitously afforded it the widest adaptability and growth potential.

In October 1992, Hayne turned his focus toward the still relevant but maturing *Urban Outfitters* customer and launched the first *Anthropologie* retail store featuring young women's casual wear and home goods. Hayne constructed the store in a renovated automobile dealership in Wayne, Pennsylvania and with its launch galvanized the vision that became the brand's hallmark: Provide an unimaginable customer experience for urban-minded women, who were now focused on career, family and home. Hayne named retail veteran Glen Senk president and enlisted him with the responsibility of refining the fledgling brand's innovative vision.

From the beginning the *Anthropologie* brand vision was unique and revolutionary. It possessed an unwavering sense of identity rare in the retail landscape. When traditional retailers were trying to address a broad demographic Anthropologie focused on serving a distinctive customer base with one-of-a-kind products. This vision quickly differentiated *Anthropologie* from other retailers and before long they became known for their carefully curated product collections and artistic visual presentations.

*Anthropologie's* approach to their physical store environment was the key differentiator between the brand and their competitors. Unlike a traditional retail setting, the *Anthropologie* customer was meant to experience the store by casually exploring an

organic narrative of room-like settings featuring a integrated mix of apparel and home products. With references to art, music and culture layered into each vignette the visual presentation communicated and reinforced the *Anthropologie* identity to customers with nuance and mastery. From its onset, the experience of an *Anthropologie* store was authentic and utterly individual.

Being authentic in product collection and visual presentation became the cornerstones of the *Anthropologie* identity. Shying away from traditional retail practices *Anthropologie* presented their merchandise as a customer might experience the products in their own home. This method, which became known as the lifestyle retail method for its realistic appearance, not only gave customers the ability to explore an environment overflowing with a unique sense of discovery but it also helped establish a personal connection between the customer and the brand. As their locations multiplied *Anthropologie* remained dedicated to maintaining this uniqueness with original display, merchandise presentations, and soundtracks in every store location.<sup>19</sup> This non-traditional practice of absolute brand authenticity eventually helped pen the company's motto: Turning the ordinary shopping trip into something extraordinary.

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<sup>19</sup> On the subject of the Anthropologie physical environment, see Brown's *Urban Cowboy* in Forbes Magazine.

### The Anthropologie Aesthetic

As previously discussed, *Anthropologie*'s philosophy from its inception was to resist the conventions of traditional retail. They were not setting out to sell a particular trend or an of-the-moment tee shirt rather they set out to create engaging experiences for and sell a branded lifestyle to their specific consumer.<sup>20</sup> With their focused, customer-centric, business philosophy *Anthropologie* founded a distinctive identity and began establishing a lasting brand impression with its consumers.

To achieve their characteristic aesthetic and build their core merchandising foundation *Anthropologie* began using three apparel concepts and six home concepts to structure their store environments. This curated product assortment provided a distinctive and authentic collection of goods that *Anthropologie* stores continue to use to guide their visual presentations and identify with the target customer base:

#### **Apparel:**

1. Ethnic
2. Feminine
3. Fashion

#### **Home:**

1. Seasonal
2. Kitchen
3. Dining Room
4. Living Room
5. Bath Room

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<sup>20</sup> On the subject of the Anthropologie consumer-centric philosophy, see WWD's *Anthropologie's Customer-Focused Culture*.

## 6. Bedroom

Their distinctive business philosophy can also be seen in the company's fiscal allocation: The company takes two percent of total sales dollars, a percentage often allocated by traditional retailers for advertising, and assigns it to store execution; staffing at least two, full-time visual employees in each retail location. Moreover these visual employees are often trained Interior Designers and artists who manage the design themes, merchandising placement and window displays of their store environment. "This is a company that hires the highest level of talent, they essentially hire set designers and every store is a different set. They depend on incredibly talented, creative people. At *Anthropologie*, a designer's personal imprint, something most chains try to obliterate in favor of a uniform look rolled out from unit to unit, is encouraged."<sup>21</sup>

To further promote the individuality of the *Anthropologie* brand they have unilaterally decided not to advertise. Instead *Anthropologie* practices a slow-growth business strategy, studying local markets prior to entering a new region. Further, they use their research findings to structure how they will engage each market they enter often launching customer-outreach campaigns centered around focus groups, fit sessions and customer surveys to study their performance within their target markets.

It is a practice that appears to be working. The average customer stay in an *Anthropologie* store lasts an hour and fifteen minutes, longer than most chain shoppers, with an average customer spend per visit at \$80, exceeding the average chain customer spend. And their customer base keeps growing. According to Glen Senk, former *Anthropologie & Urban Outfitters* President, "Most stores cater to a broad base of

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<sup>21</sup> On the subject of the Anthropologie design-driven philosophy, see WWD's *Anthropologie's Customer-Focused Culture*.

customers or specialize in a product category. We specialize in one customer. And we offer her everything from clothing to bed linens to furniture to soap.”<sup>22</sup>

(Note: *Anthropologie*, however, does invest in a brand catalog that averages a distribution rate of 15 million copies, a higher circulation rate than most magazines.)

At the same time the company clearly places a high premium on their organizational structure and operational expertise. They practice “autonomy-within-a-structure” and unlike other retailers both their creative and buying teams operate with an extraordinary amount of freedom. They exercise firm budget controls yet give each store autonomy within their merchandising, display and product placement decisions. “We are as controlled as we are creative. Our systems are state-of-the-art, we live by a complex calendar, we are risk takers but our risks are always calculated. Accurate point-of-sale systems, immaculate stockrooms, tight expense controls all in one way or another help to improve the customer experience.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> On the subject of the Anthropologie consumer-centric philosophy, see LaBarre’s *Sophisticated Sell* published in Fast Company.

<sup>23</sup> On the subject of the Anthropologie consumer-centric philosophy, see LaBarre’s *Sophisticated Sell* published in Fast Company.

## The Anthropologie Lifestyle Experience: The Three Components

### The physical environment

*Anthropologie* believes their physical store environment adds an immeasurable amount to their customer experience. They consider their environment and its unique presentation the key differentiator between themselves and their competitors.

For *Anthropologie* lifestyle retail is about taking an immersive approach to brand presentation; this strategy combines both their home and apparel merchandise and showcases it in one distinctive environment. As a lifestyle brand they want their shopper captivated by every presentation narrative. Thus their aesthetic is directed at maintaining a complete lifestyle environment for customers to experience.



*Figure 14. Anthropologie Image of Lifestyle Retail Environment*



For example, each *Anthropologie* home vignette is loosely structured like a specific room in a home: garden or season concept, kitchen, dining room, living room, bath and bedroom. By arranging their home presentations around this identifiable lifestyle narrative *Anthropologie* is establishing a familiar association between their brand and their consumer. And as the consumer explores each familiar vignette they will find a combination of both home and apparel within - a complete lifestyle narrative. This full integration of products provides an identifiable *Anthropologie* experience. Connections like this are intrinsic in establishing *Anthropologie* as both a relatable and desired lifestyle in the consumers mind.



*Figure 15. Anthropologie Image of Lifestyle Retail Narrative*

### Principles of Design

The principles of design are seven fundamental guidelines that define the arrangement of objects in space. They establish structure and introduce visual order by shaping the relationship between shape, line, color, value, and texture to create a succinct composition.

As a ballet dancer begins their training by learning technique at the barre or musicians master their craft with the rote memory of scales, *Anthropologie* visual merchants learn how to create compelling environments by studying these basic guidelines. And through their use they are able to create balanced, organized, and dynamic visual presentations.

## Proportion

Proportion is the relationship between one object to another, or the relationship between objects in a composition. Proportion establishes a consistent visual relationship between objects. Something that is well-proportioned has neither too much nor too little of a specific quality.



**Figure 16. Anthropologie Image: Proportion**

*The image represents how the proportional relationship may be one of magnitude, quantity or degree. Note how the relationship of fixture assortment and product placement can help establish a well-proportioned vignette and visual connection between objects. Each side of the composition shares equal visual weight and gives the illusion of similar proportion within the whole composition.*

## Scale

The Scale of an object is its size relative to its surroundings.

In retail environments, human scale is usually the base of our perception. In lifestyle retail scale this is commonly exemplified in display installation and three- dimensional composition.



**Figure 17. Anthropologie Image: Scale**

*The image represents how human scale is often used within an interior space to create a feeling of smallness of bigness. Note how the use of dramatic scale within an interior environment can achieve emphasis as well as provide a visual orientation within the space itself. Emphasis of both space and product presentation is achieved by the extreme exaggeration of display scale.*



## Balance

The conventional definition of balance is equal weight distribution.

However it is possible to have both symmetrical and asymmetrical balance.

Symmetrical balance is frequently used to create visual calm or formal compositions; asymmetrical balance is often used to create dynamic presentations.



**Figure 18. Anthropologie Image: Balance**

*The image represents how proportion and scale in conjunction with size and shape can help establish asymmetrical visual balance. The visual weight of the left side of the composition holds visual weight than the center and right sides of the composition creating asymmetrical balance.*

## Harmony

Harmony is created when an arrangement of objects produces a pleasing visual result. For example, in lifestyle, the repetition of elements such as shape, color, or texture can produce visual harmony.



**Figure 19. Anthropologie Image: Harmony**

*The image represents how the repetitive use of similar shape, color, textures, and materials create visual harmony.*

## Unity and Variety

Variety is the assemblage of diversified objects. Unity is the collection of objects that share similar characteristics. In lifestyle retail variety is important because too much similarity can create stagnancy and unity is important, as too much variety can be frenetic. Achieving the right balance of both unity and variety produces a harmonious composition.



**Figure 20. Anthropologie Image: Unity and Variety**

*The repetitive use of similar color, texture and pattern creates visual unity while the variation of scale and texture create visual variety.*



## Rhythm

Rhythm is created when elements are repeated in regular patterns. Lifestyle retailers use rhythm to establish visual unity and encourage a path of movement through a composition. Rhythm can be expressed through the gradation of color and size or a subtle linear pattern.



**Figure 21. Anthropologie Image: Rhythm**

*The image represents how repetition of form, shape, color and texture can create a linear rhythm through space.*



## Emphasis

Emphasis establishes importance. In lifestyle retail emphasis is used to achieve focal interest on a chosen product or display. It can also be used to visually move customers to a desired area of the store.



**Figure 22. Anthropologie Image: Emphasis**

*The image represents how emphasis of form, scale, and texture can create a specific focus within a space.*

*The massed-out presentation uses form, color, material and scale to create a specific product presentation focus within a space.*

The utilization of the principles of design assists *Anthropologie* in establishing a visual order to their physical environments. And through their application the company is able to execute a distinctive visual aesthetic that lays the foundation of their overall customer experience.

### Planning the Interior Environment

The *Anthropologie* approach to their physical space is the defining characteristic that separates them from traditional retailers. Rather than rolling out the same space over and over again *Anthropologie* celebrates the individuality of each store location, therefore no two *Anthropologie* stores are identical. As their store design often vary greatly from location to location they commonly experiment with different ways of dividing space and rolling out their branded merchandise structure.

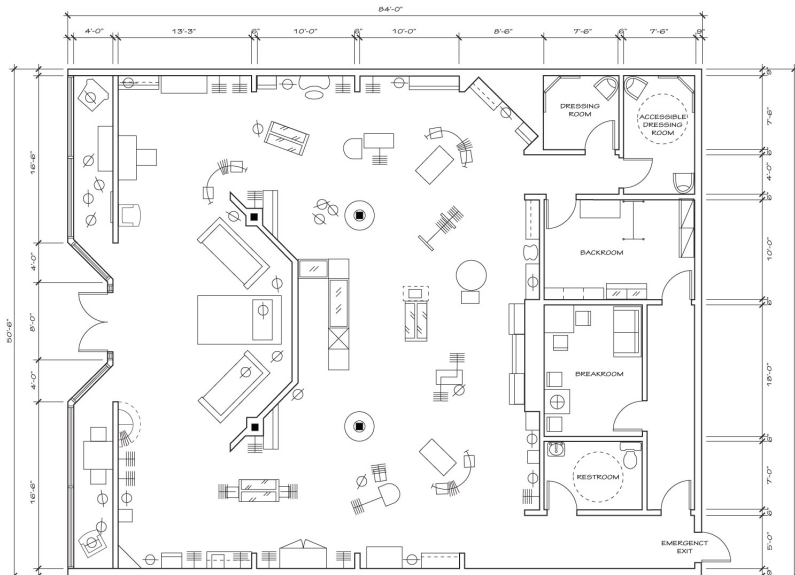
For research purposes it is important to explore how the company approaches the problem of floor planning store locations to maintain the identifiable *Anthropologie* physical environment when no locations are the same:

#### 1. Floor plans

Interior Designers learn that the best way to organize a space is to look at it in architectural plan. By doing this they are able to organize a space on paper prior to physically executing it. *Anthropologie's* visual teams follow the same protocol. For them their store floor plan is like a map of their environment, allowing them to distinguish points of interests, relationships between concepts, and establish paths of circulation. Their floor plan is in essence the foundation of their customer experience. It determines when the customer encounters what

product, in what order the store unfolds, and what impression the customer takes with them.

One of the primary strategies *Anthropologie* utilizes when organizing a floor plan is a philosophy known as “Public to Private”. More specifically, *Anthropologie* designs their floor plans to reflect a home environment: the first vignette a customer encounters is the threshold and entry, then the living and kitchen areas and as the shopper travels back through the store environment they experience the more private spaces such as the bedroom and bath areas. The “public to private” strategy establishes a familiar, or intuitive, environment for the customer. *Anthropologie* believes that this familiarity of space and surroundings is crucial in establishing the emotional connection between the brand and their target consumer thus reinforcing the identifiable *Anthropologie* lifestyle.

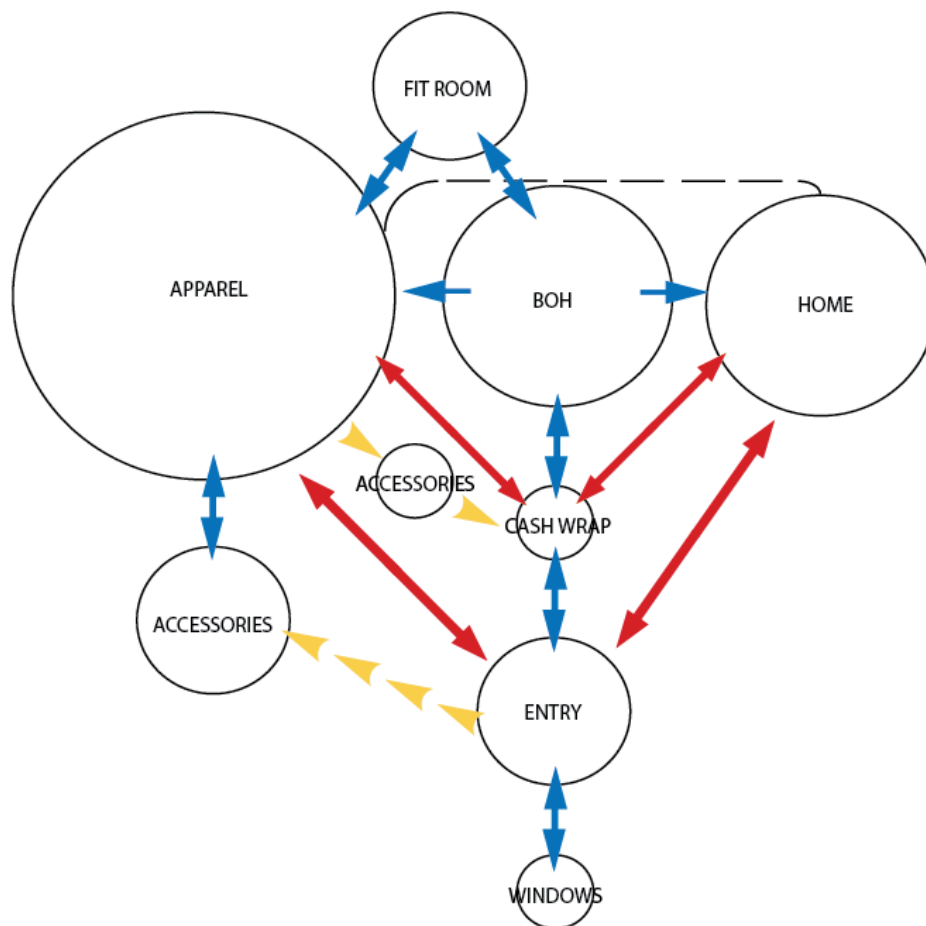


**Figure 23: Retail Floor Plan**

Example of retail store floor plan drawn in scale.

## 2. Bubble diagrams

The bubble diagram is a floor- planning tool used by Interior Designers when making initial space assessments. The *Anthropologie* visual merchant uses the same tool during preliminary placement planning of their store environments. The bubbles provide merchants a visual representation of concept placement, illustrating the overall flow of the physical space without having to physically move either fixture or product.



**Figure 24. Bubble Diagram**

### Merchandising strategy

Once the *Anthropologie* merchant has solidified the floor structure, through working in plan, and concept placement, through laying out their bubble diagrams, they are ready to set the floor and merchandise the product.

A good *Anthropologie* merchandiser is able to dictate the customer experience through concept and merchandise placement. They determine what merchandise is placed where, what products interact together, how the presentations interrelate in the environment and when the customer encounters each narrative. Merchandisers tell the customer a story through their placement decisions. Further, this authenticity in product collection and visual presentation creates a clear and consistent brand identity that establishes a lasting brand impression with the customer.

Merchandising is one factor that differentiates the *Anthropologie* brand from that of traditional retailers. This is due to how *Anthropologie* merchandises their product. *Anthropologie* practices a lifestyle approach to product presentations, intermingling apparel and home merchandise together in a manner that expresses how the *Anthropologie* customer would utilize the product in actual life. (For example: beautiful wine glasses, a selection of cocktail books, party dresses and a display of baubles makes a festive tabletop statement that the *Anthropologie* shopper can visualize themselves using for a holiday party.) This lifestyle strategy, along with the identifiable “public to private” floor plan, creates a branded *Anthropologie* experience. It also lays the foundation for the emotional a connection between the brand and their consumer that ultimately persuades them to make a purchase. Thus merchandising, especially for a lifestyle brand such as *Anthropologie*, is a powerful tool. It creates brand desire.

## 1. Product categorization

Although *Anthropologie* values individuality amongst its store locations it must maintain an as semblance of visual cohesiveness within the brand to achieve a recognizable brand identity. To do this *Anthropologie* utilizes a method of product categorization called the “concept”.

At *Anthropologie*, a concept is the identity behind a given area of the store. A concept helps establish the emotion and personality the company wants to convey to the customer in a given area of the store. Concepts help determine what vignettes should look like and what product will live within them.

To maintain consistency across all stores *Anthropologie*’s Corporate Office communicates concepts through seasonal, inspiration binders. The binders introduce the personality, or muse, behind each seasonal vignette; what she looks like, what interests her, where she lives, what she loves, etc. Once the binders have been rolled-out, the Visual Merchandisers in each store, and their supporting visual teams, utilize the inspirations to create their concept vignettes. The strategy of utilizing seasonal, inspirational binders is effective for the *Anthropologie* brand for although each store’s concepts are unique to their individual locations the concepts across all *Anthropologie* stores maintain a similar integrity as they are linked by an overarching theme.

In the *Anthropologie* merchandising strategy the concept is the umbrella that unites all *Anthropologie* store visual presentations. However it is the execution of the concept that is unique to every *Anthropologie* location.

## 2. Product placement

*Anthropologie* believes that *how* an item is arranged is as crucial to the customer's interest in the product as where it is placed. As the *Anthropologie* merchant establishes the floor plan and the flow of concepts within their store, they must simultaneously consider what product will support each concept and therefore drive their overall business. The combination of these aspects is the foundation for an *Anthropologie* concept vignette.

To achieve the distinctive merchandising presentations that are synonymous with the *Anthropologie* brand, the *Anthropologie* merchants utilize two merchandising strategies: lifestyle presentations and straightforward or massed-out presentations.

- a. Lifestyle presentations: an organic style of product placement where merchandise is represented as it would be used in everyday life. This is where *Anthropologie* distinguishes themselves from their competitors and where they establish their authentic brand identity.
- b. Straightforward presentations: are frequently used by traditional retailers. It is a method of merchandising that accommodates maximized stock levels in simple, often massed-out quantity, presentations.

## Display strategy

*Anthropologie* display encompasses anything a store does to enhance the customer's sensory experience. More specifically, it is the artistic transformation of their physical environment through unique sounds, sights, scents and textures. (For example: a basin tube with water flowing through pipe and flange might create a hand-crafted “sink” effect in the kitchen vignette.) It is the element of display that adds depth, nuance and definition to their physical store environments that is often absent in traditional retail platforms.

### **Display Intention:**

- To contextualize a merchandise presentation or add context to a vignette
- To delineate or define a specific, vignette, space or region within the physical store
- To guide customers through the store.

Note: Successful display intuitively leads customers on a journey through a space while showcasing key presentations, enhancing specific products, and expressing the Anthropologie point of view.

### **Display Executions:**

- Window Installations
- Hanging Sculptural
- Floor Bound Sculptural
- Connected Floor to Ceiling Sculptural
- Wall Sculptural
- Custom Fixtures



- Tabletop Features
- Water Features
- Green Features
- Secondary Display: Signage

**Display Categories:**

- Installations that have no product involved
- Installations that are integrated with product

**Display Placement:**

- Areas that introduce the customer or create a moment of pause
- Areas that encourage customer engagement
- Areas that reinforce a concepts or brand narrative



**Figure 25. Wall Display**

*Wall, sculptural display used as a contextualizer within a vignette presentation.*



**Figure 26. Floor Bound Display**

*Floor bound sculptural display used to add context to a grouping of forms.*





**Figure 27. Secondary Display: Signage**

*Secondary display used as signage to highlight specific product on tabletop presentation.*

### **Sensory Branding:**

An important aspect of the *Anthropologie* display strategy is their use of sensory branding; subtle cues, such as music and scent which enhance or elevate the emotional response a customer has toward a given situation or environment. The sensory experience in an *Anthropologie* store connects with their customers in such an impactful way, often triggering memories or emotive responses, that they as a brand believe this to be a far more powerful and influential strategy than any one product display alone can be.

**Sight**

Creating the *unimagined* visual experience is the founding principle of the *Anthropologie* brand. This is achieved through imaginative merchandise presentations and thoughtful display installation, which enhance the overall customer experience.

**Sound**

*Anthropologie* utilizes a mix of music and natural sounds, such as running water, to engage their customers' imaginations and memories. This auditory experience is meant to subtly create an emotional connection with each shopper while inspiring calm, creativity, adventure, desire and reflection.

**Touch**

A rich product assortment and imaginative visual display provide the textural elements unique to the *Anthropologie* experience. Customers are encouraged to engage their surroundings thus enhancing their sense of exploration and discovery.

**Scent**

Scent is often considered the most inspiring sense used within the *Anthropologie* store experience. They use candles, incense, soaps and fauna and blooming flowers to build a layered, nuanced and inspiring customer experience.

**Kinesthesia**

The experience of moving through an *Anthropologie* environment is far beyond that of the traditional retail experience. The *Anthropologie* customer enters a store and begins a journey of discovery, moving from public to private space in a uniquely personal exploration of their surroundings.

Summary

The true mission of the *Anthropologie* physical environment is to turn an ordinary shopping experience into something extraordinary. It is to provide a unique sense of discovery, inspiration and connection for the *Anthropologie* customer. As a lifestyle retailer they connect personally with their consumer and communicate their distinctive vision through product placement, merchandise strategy and visual display. It is their unique physical environment that builds connection and elicits emotion from their customer. And through their environment they establish the very foundation of their overall customer experience. When done effectively the *Anthropologie* physical store environment establishes them as an identifiable and desirable way of life – moving them beyond the business of selling goods and into the business of selling their branded lifestyle.

## **Product**

As we have discussed, the *Anthropologie* business objective is not to sell the most of any one product, rather, it is to sell their distinctive lifestyle. And to sell their lifestyle it is the total assortment of products that becomes most important to their presentations and not the depth of one, specific product category. In fact, the brand believes that the constant change in product assortment actually heightens their product desirability. This approach is a drastic departure from the methodology used by traditional retailers who largely operate as category experts (i.e., *The Gap* is a knit and denim category expert). Further, *Anthropologie* defines this distinct difference by calling themselves *customer* experts. And their objective as a brand is to deliver a product assortment in each store that defines and offers the brand's identifiable lifestyle to their customers.

## **Customer Relationship**

*Anthropologie* has built their brand on being perceptive, intuitive and respectful in regards to their target customer base. They do not cater to a broad base of consumers. Rather, they know who their customer is and they specialize in offering her everything she needs to attain the *Anthropologie* lifestyle. This business practice enables *Anthropologie* to craft identifiable and authentic shopping experiences for their customers that they cannot find anywhere else. This in turn fosters and builds lasting brand relationships.

## Conclusion

*Anthropologie* is one of the most successful brick and mortar retailers in the market today. As a brand they possess an unwavering sense of identity and have created a revolutionary business platform that is drastically divergent from their traditional competitors. This research suggests that this success is, in large part, due to their non-traditional practice of lifestyle retail.

What makes the *Anthropologie* brand unlike traditional retailers is its compelling combination of authentic brand presentation, product collection and distinctive physical environments. Rather than practicing a single business vertical of solely selling merchandise to consumers they sell a holistic and inherently unique branded experience for a target consumer. While traditional retailers have commonly addressed a broad demographic *Anthropologie* focuses on serving a distinctive customer base with one-of-a-kind products.

Yet it is *Anthropologie*'s physical store environments that elevate them from their competition. Unlike traditional retail environments the *Anthropologie* store encourages customers to become a part of their brand narrative. Shoppers are encouraged to come in and explore a collection of lifestyle vignettes that reflect familiar associations: a home, favorite travel destinations, a memory. With references to art, music and culture layered throughout the physical store presentation not only connects personally with their customers it also shrewdly communicates a focused *Anthropologie* identity to all who experiences it.

Being authentic in product collection and visual presentation are the cornerstones of the *Anthropologie* identity however it is the strategy behind the execution of their



physical environments that is the greater focus of this research. As previously suggested, research proposes that *Anthropologie* accomplishes their compelling environments by studying, then implementing, the guiding principles of design used within the Interior Design field. And with the practice of Interior Design strategies they are able to create balanced, organized, and dynamic visual presentations that effectively set them apart from their competitors while skillfully communicating and selling the *Anthropologie* lifestyle to consumers.

As their brand continues to grow *Anthropologie* remains dedicated to maintaining their distinctive market position by practicing absolute brand authenticity across their product assortment and physical environments verticals and their fundamental belief that they alone can turn an ordinary shopping experience into something extraordinary.

# THE BLUEPRINT

*A GUIDE FOR CREATING YOUR LIFESTYLE RETAIL  
ENVIRONMENT*

NICHOLE R. STAKER

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## THE BLUEPRINT

# INTRODUCTION

Across an increasingly competitive retail landscape, merchants of all sizes are fighting for survival. Industry giants, who once anchored sprawling shopping malls, are now struggling in the face of steep declines in pedestrian traffic. Retail merchants can no longer thrive on the exclusive reliance of traditional brick and mortar platforms.

Today's retail consumers demand better. Better service, better quality, and a much better retail experience. And, as web storefronts have proliferated, they've also grown accustomed to the modern conveniences of online shopping - a trend which has exacerbated the precipitous drop in merchant foot traffic. To re-engage these consumers and reassert their brands, retailers must craft a compelling lifestyle narrative that seeks to entice, inform, as well as entertain.

# THE BRICK + MORTAR RETAILER

Given this dramatic shift in consumer behavior, the question facing brick and mortar retailers is one of relevance. In this new, experience driven market is there an untapped business platform that can make physical stores relevant once again?

# PURPOSE

This guide is a proposed solution for independent retailers. In it, we will discuss the principles of lifestyle retail and how changing the physical environment can transform the customer experience and thus positively affect overall business performance.

The blueprint is meant to serve as a guide on the lifestyle retail journey. Use it as a launch point into the exciting new era of experience driven retail and refer back to it when you hit roadblocks along the way. We suggest you take notes, add your own thoughts and make it your own. Remember, you are your best resource for knowing what your customer is looking for in a shopping experience!

## THE BLUEPRINT



# THE STORE

### Physical Environment

Unlike most traditional retail stores, a lifestyle retailer believes in the power of physical environment. Consider *American Apparel* – until recently, an upstart purveyor of basic tee shirts. Except, *American Apparel*, unlike its much larger competitors, didn't sell plastic wrapped, monochromatic tee shirts out of large corrugated bins in national discount department stores. Instead, they sold a rebellious, youthful, carefree lifestyle that manifested itself in both colorful product and bold presentation, in each of its individually designed boutique stores. This turned the ordinary experience of buying a tee shirt into something extraordinary. Thus, as you begin your journey into lifestyle retail you must be fully aware that your store's physical environment is the key differentiator between your brand and that of your competition.

## KEY ELEMENTS

To build an UNIMAGINABLE physical space you must begin by reviewing the key elements that work together to effectively build distinctive visual presentations that both captivate and inspire the shopper.

### Menu of Elements in a Lifestyle Store:

- Extraordinary Experience
- Exclusivity
- Clear & Consistent Brand Communication
- Extraordinary Visual Environment
- Wow factor
- Innovative
- Unique Vision
- Product Focus
- Sense of Exploration
- Individuality
- Extraordinary Sensory Experience/Response for the Customer
- Emotional Connection to the Brand by the Customer

## THE BLUEPRINT

# SPACE PROGRAMMING



To plan, create and execute a lifestyle retail store, a merchant needs to have a fundamental awareness of the same methods and practices utilized by interior designers.

To begin, let's start by assessing the needs of your store. We do this with a tool called a SPACE PROGRAM.

The space program is a methodology used to think through the requirements of an interior. Space programming involves asking questions about the needs of the physical space prior to actually designing it.

### Basic Steps

#### 1 | Documentation

The first step in your space programming exercise is to document your space. The easiest way to do this is to utilize the architectural plan drawings of your store. These drawings will give you an aerial view of your overall floor plan.

#### 2 | Analysis

The second step is to notate your existing store conditions: where are the doors & windows, where are the natural paths of circulation, what materials and finishes are present (for example: wall paint, floor tile, etc.), are there any architectural details, what is the location of plumbing/electrical/mechanical fixtures and outlets, are there elements you can modify?

#### 3 | Requirements

The third step is to make a list of requirements for your physical store environment. This will help you think through your business needs as well as organize the visual requirements of your new lifestyle environment.

#### 4 | Notations

The final step in space programming is to fill in the details. Once you have thought through all of your business requirements dig in further.

Once you have finished the exercise reflect on your answers. These will be your building blocks in creating an impactful store environment.

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# THE FOUNDATION

So you have made your assessments... now what? The next step in creating an experience driven retail experience is to define your story. What do you want to communicate to your shoppers? What is your space saying about your brand?

As a lifestyle retailer you have the ability to think big. This is your moment to take your customer on a journey of exploration, to get them off of their sofa for a reason. Inspire them!

# THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

What do you remember from your last shopping trip? Was it the sounds, the scent of a store, a beautiful window, the energy that buzzed about? These memories are aesthetic experiences. They communicate the brand's identity.

Individuals experience these affects through their body, mind, and soul. We gain pleasure by stimulating our senses and engaging our minds. As a lifestyle brand it is important to consider your physical store environment as a catalyst of expression.

## Aesthetics in Today's Market

The aesthetic experience of a store contributes to the overall shopping experience desired by today's consumers. They can be categorized into three categories:

- **Formal Qualities** - what we can perceive about a space or product. Color, shape, proportion, and sound are all examples of the formal qualities of aesthetics.
- **Expressive Qualities** - reflect the emotion of a space and equally important, evoke emotion in the shopper.
- **Symbolic Qualities** - express an idea about a presentation or space. A product with white and navy stripes might communicate an idea about sailing. Symbolic qualities provide context to physical space.

As a brand you are responsible for your own aesthetic experience.

## THE BLUEPRINT

# DESIGN ELEMENTS



To create a lifestyle environment a retailer must understand how the arrangement of design elements work together to establish a visual relationship between objects within an enclosed space.

Before you begin to create a composition first consider how the fundamental elements can best be utilized to create an inspiring visual presentation.

## Elements of Design

### 1 | Space

The three-dimensional area that is empty or available for use

### 2 | Line

An area or border that separates two spaces

### 3 | Shape

The two-dimensional or three-dimensional form of an object

### 4 | Texture

The tactile quality of an object

### 5 | Color

A phenomenon of light that enables the eye to differentiate identical objects: through hue, lightness, and saturation

### 6 | Value

The lightness or darkness of a color



## THE BLUEPRINT



### Principles of Design

What differentiates a lifestyle or experienced based retail space from that of their traditional competitors is *how* their retail physical store is organized and presented.

There are eight basic rules that define the organization of objects within space.

Utilize these guidelines to assist you as you begin to create structure and establish visual order within your store environments.

#### 1 | Proportion

The relationship between the size or amount of things



Illustration 1: Proportion in Display

The proportion of display to dress form creates a dramatic visual effect.  
Example of Key Element(s): Wow Factor, Innovation and Extraordinary Visual Environment

## THE BLUEPRINT

**Principles of Design****2 | Scale**

A proportion between a set of objects

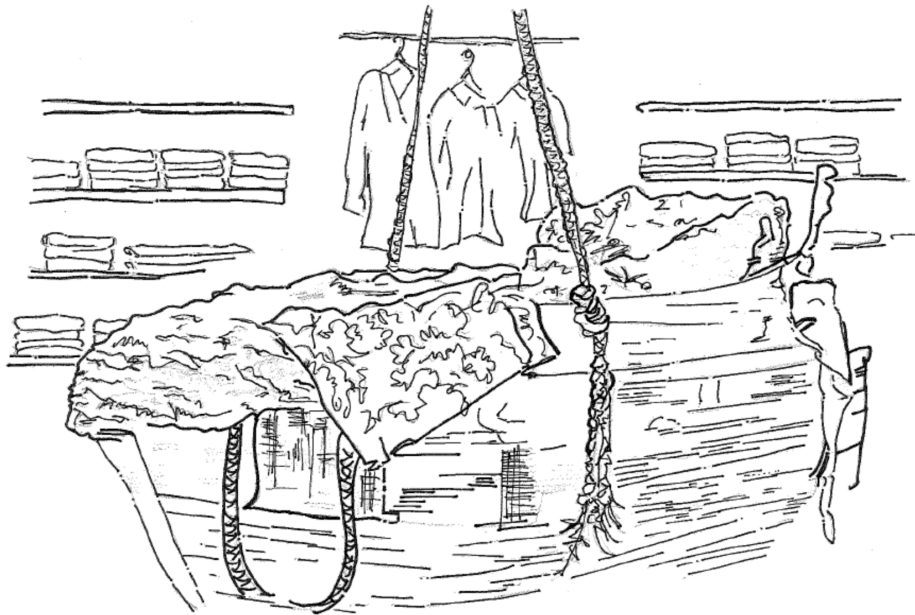


Illustration 2: Scale in Display

The scale of boat display to the merchandise wall creates a dramatic visual focus.

Example of Key Element(s): Product Focus, Wow Factor, Innovation and Extraordinary Visual Environment

## THE BLUEPRINT

**Principles of Design****3 | Balance**

The pleasing arrangement of objects



Illustration 3: Balance in Display

The balance of merchandise fixtures and wall display creates a pleasing visual presentation.

Example of Key Element(s): Product Focus, Unique Vision and Individuality

## THE BLUEPRINT

**Principles of Design****4 | Harmony**

The pleasing combination of different things



Illustration 4: Harmony in Display

The harmony of the merchandise structure creates a pleasing visual presentation.

Example of Key Element(s): Product Focus, Exclusivity, and Clear & Consistent Brand Communication

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Principles of Design

#### 5 | Unity

The combination of parts so that they seem to belong together

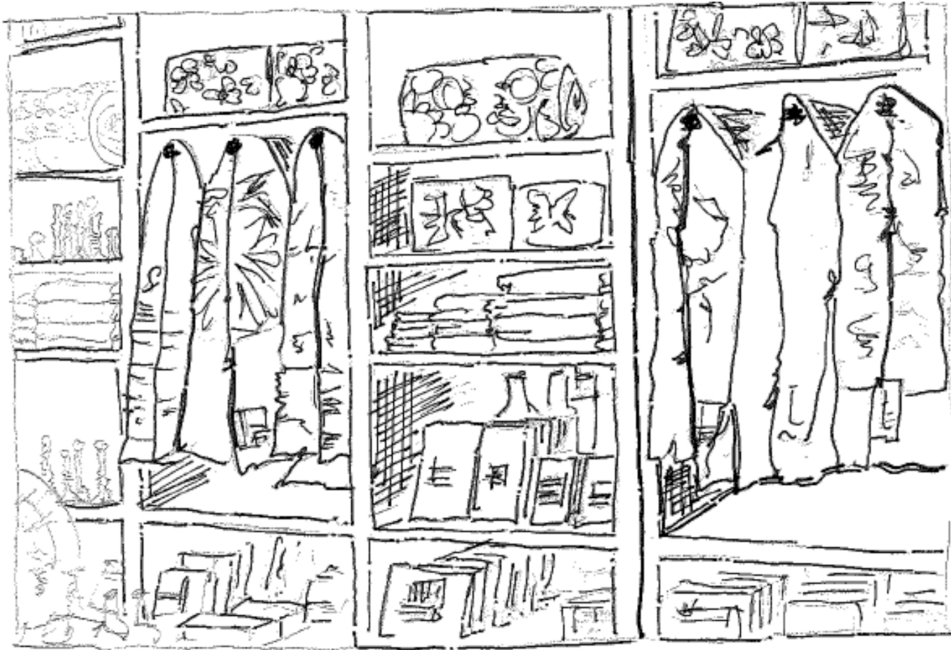


Illustration 5: Unity in Display

The unity of merchandise creates a strong product focused/class presentation.

Example of Key Element(s): Product Focus, Clear & Consistent Brand Communication, Unique Vision and Individuality

## THE BLUEPRINT

**Principles of Design****6 | Variety**

The collection of different things



Illustration 6: Variety in Display

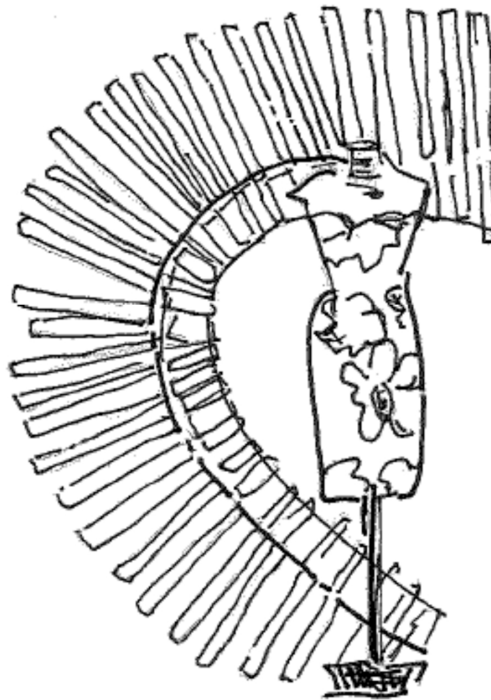
The variety of merchandise creates a thematic visual presentation.

Example of Key Element(s): Product Focus, Unique Vision, Sense of Exploration and Emotional Connection to the Brand by the Customer

## THE BLUEPRINT

**Principles of Design****7 | Rhythm**

A recurring pattern or repetition



Illustrated 7: Rhythm in Display

The rhythm of the surrounding display creates a visual movement that frames the dress form.  
Example of Key Element(s): Wow Factor, Innovative, Unique Vision and Individuality

## THE BLUEPRINT

### Principles of Design

#### 8 | Emphasis

The indication of importance

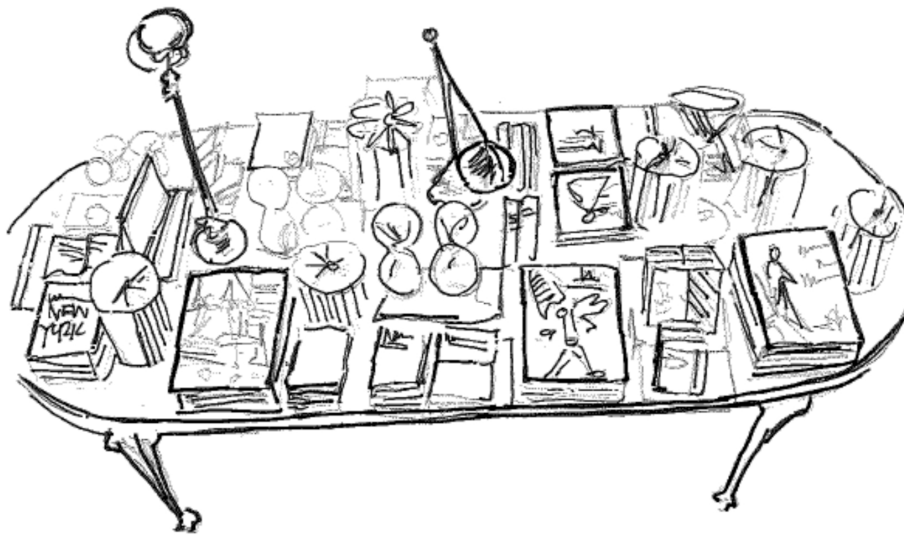


Illustration 8: Emphasis in Display

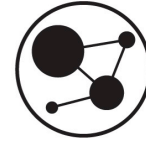
The emphasis of books and stationary creates a strong product focused presentation.

Example of Key Element(s): Product Focus, Clear & Consistent Brand Communication and Wow Factor

As your physical store environment is the single most important differentiator of your lifestyle brand, you, as a lifestyle merchandiser must thoughtfully and skillfully execute your space. By applying the design principles throughout your planning you will be more likely to make smart, intentional design decisions that directly affect your overall customer experience.



## THE BLUEPRINT



# THE BUBBLE OR BLOCK DIAGRAM

When making initial space assessments, interior designers often use a method of diagramming called the “bubble diagram” or the “block diagram”. This is a method of quick ideation where designers look at a space in plan and make bubbles (or blocks) to roughly represent zones or areas such as a kitchen, bedroom or bathroom.

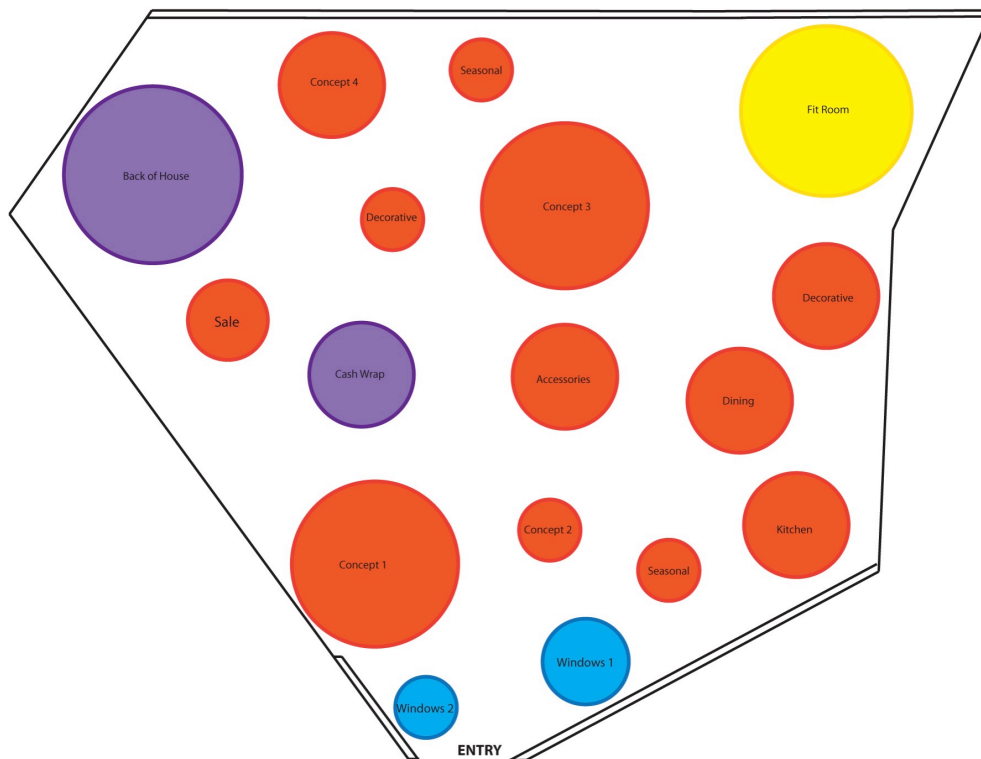
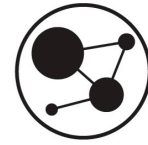


Figure 28: Example of Bubble Diagram

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Uses

You can use the bubble diagram method as a tool when thinking through your space. For instance, you can block out a space on paper to establish specific areas for merchandise presentations, where vignettes will land and where installations will be located within their store environment. It is an exercise that allows designers to try out ideas before they commit to them in plan drawings. For lifestyle merchants it is a visual representation of the store environment's overall structure, balance and flow.

### Diagramming

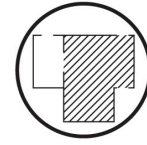
To begin, draw the architectural boundaries of your physical store. If you have an existing architectural plan on file make a copy of it and use it to sketch on as it will provide you with your most accurate dimensional representation. Then proceed to think through the business assessments you made during your initial space programming exercise. What did that information tell you about the requirements of your store? Use that information and begin mapping out each region of your interior space using larger circles, or blocks, for areas that need more physical real estate and smaller circles for those whose spatial allocations are less.

#### Bubble Diagram Considerations:

- How do you want your customers to experience the store?
- In what order do you want the store to unfold?
- What is the story or message you want to convey to your customer?
- How many defined areas do you need?
- What are the business demands for each area or vignette?
- What are the business demands for specific merchandise?
- Where should your main paths of circulation be located?
- What are your security considerations?
- What are your privacy considerations?
- What are your storage considerations?

When you have completed your diagram you will have your first visual representation, or map, of your physical space.

## THE BLUEPRINT



# THE FLOOR PLAN

The third step in the creation of your lifestyle environment is understanding how to effectively divide your space. Just as an Interior Designer maps out spatial placements of rooms and furniture on a floor plan as a lifestyle merchant you too can utilize the floor plan of your store to organize its space on paper prior to executing it. (If an architectural drawing of your store is not available you should measure the store's perimeter walls and defining architectural elements and roughly draw a plan indicating windows, columns and openings.) Your dimensioned floor plan will be your starting block for the following floor planning exercise.

### Uses

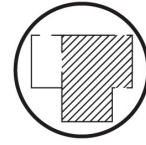
First lets review why designers use floor plans? The floor plan is a visual diagram of physical space. It establishes the relationship between furniture, fixtures and architecture within an interior environment. Working in plan allows Interior Designers (and lifestyle merchandisers!) to clearly organize their physical environments before moving a single object. With it, merchants can determine in what order the store unfolds for the customer and how they want the customer to experience the physical space.

### A Good Plan

What are the characteristics of a successful floor plan? A floor plan visually lays out the customer experience within your store environment. More specifically, your floor plan depicts what, when and how the customer is engaged within your store. Your floor plan directly effects your customer experience.

To achieve a successful floor plan you need to begin by reviewing your business objectives and identify the lifestyle experience you want communicate to your customer.

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Floor Planning Considerations:

- What are your business objectives?
- What is your product focus?
- What merchandise can share space within your environment?
- What furniture/fixtures are needed to effectively merchandise your product selection?
- What is the right balance of fixtures to furniture pieces to effectively merchandise your product selection?
- What is the landscape (the customer's overall view) of your store?
- What are the paths of circulation?
- How can you utilize display installation to support your vignettes and direct customer circulation?

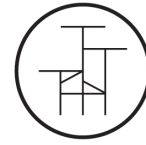
### Drawing the Plan

Once you have made your assessments you can begin to draw. Working from the space allocations you indicated in your bubble diagrams build each area of your store within those boundaries. Use squares, circles and rectangles to approximate the size and shapes of your tables and fixtures. Remember to include areas for display (see more under "Display") and moments of decompression. Work your way from front to back always keeping in mind the requirements you determined for each space and the story you want to tell.

When you are finished put your pencil down and visually move through your floor plan as you envision your customer would travel through your store. What areas are working well? What areas do you see that might need rethought? Is there a clear path of circulation? Are there moments of decompression for the customer to stop and enjoy their surroundings? After you have reviewed Steps 1-3 and everything looks good it is time to move onto physically creating your environment.

## THE BLUEPRINT

## SETTING THE FLOOR



To organize interior spaces designers arrange selected furnishings and fixtures into patterns according to practical, aesthetic and behavioral guidelines. These arrangements are tools that divide the areas within an interior space.

**Where to Begin**

When setting the furniture and fixture placement on your sales floor it is important to begin at the front of the store then work your way back one fixture at a time. You never get a second chance to make a good first impression and the front of store your brand's first opportunity to sell your lifestyle to customers. Consider your front of store like a foyer in a home, or the *porte cochere* of a hotel. The first impression you create establishes the tone for the rest of the physical space.



Illustration 9: Display as a Threshold Statement

The grouping of fixtures and merchandise creates a narrative entry threshold.

Example of Key Element(s): Clear & Consistent Brand Communication, Extraordinary Visual Environment, Unique Vision and Individuality

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Basic Steps

#### 1 | Create a Threshold

A lifestyle retailer wants their customers to enter their store and pause for a moment to take in the visual landscape. This is the same principle an Interior Designer uses when setting up an entry or foyer in a residential home. A threshold should set the tone for the rest of the store while providing a welcoming decompression space.

#### 2 | Create an Initial Focus

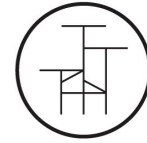
When designing a lifestyle retail store there is no single piece of real estate as crucial to the communication of the brand identity as the entry statement. The entry statement is where the customer naturally focuses first upon entry. Depending on the brand, the entry statement could be a display installation, a product driven vignette, a group of forms, even a gallery wall. Whatever the presentation is, the most important factor of the entry statement is that it clearly, and immediately, communicates the brand identity to the consumer.



Illustration 10: Display as Initial Focus

The grouping of dress forms & display installation creates a creative vignette opening moment.  
 Example of Key Element(s): Wow Factor, Innovative, Unique Vision, Individuality and  
 Extraordinary Sensory Experience/Response for the Customer

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Opening Vignette Considerations:

- What is the initial statement you want to communicate to your customer?
- What is your initial product focus?
- What is the first fixture?

### 3 | Maximize the Landscape

One of the goals of lifestyle retail floor planning is to utilize the furniture and fixtures within the store in the most advantageous way possible to communicate the overall brand identity.

### 4 | Create A Flow

A lifestyle retailer wants to create a natural flow from one vignette to another. Interior Designers refer to this idea as visual progression through space. A lifestyle merchant can use this theory when mapping out the physical landscape of the store. By evaluating site lines, decompression spaces and circulation paths a merchant can establish a rhythm to the overall customer experience they are designing.

### 5 | Paths of Circulation

The relationship between furniture and fixtures to one another within the physical store space establishes a path of circulation for the customer. This is an important factor for to consider as you essentially have the power to control how the store unfolds for your shopper by how you guide them through your space.

## THE BLUEPRINT



### The Concept

A concept is a great way to give identity to a given area of the store. A concept helps establish the emotion and personality your company wants to convey to the customer in a given area of the space. Concepts help determine what vignettes should look like and what product will live within them.

If you have not received corporate direction, or do not have a corporation to answer to, you can build concepts on your own.

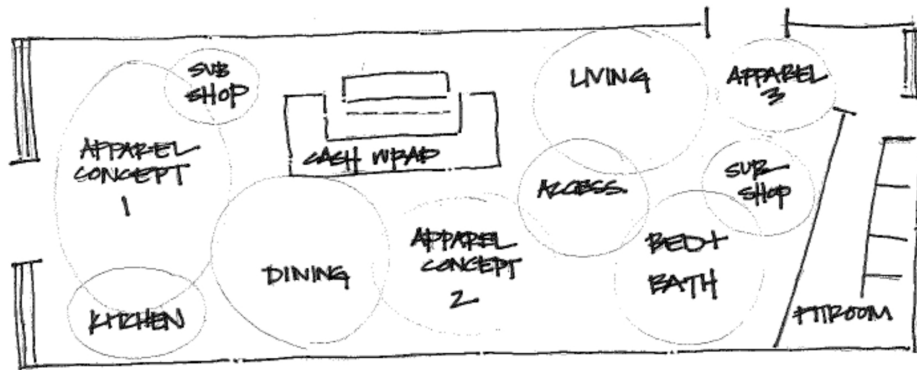
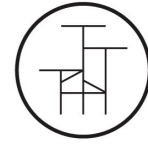


Illustration 11: Retail Store Bubble Diagram  
Bubble diagram showing the placement of apparel & home concepts on a store floor plan.



## THE BLUEPRINT



### 1 | Assess Your Merchandise

To start it is always helpful to assess your current merchandise selection while brainstorming. What is your merchandise selection telling you? When you pair pieces together what story could you build? Who is the person, or the identity you envision, living within your concept? Give your concept a name; this will help your creative juices to flow more freely!

### 2 | Number of Concepts

The number of concepts your store has will depend largely of your volume of product and the physical space you have to utilize. However the key to effectively utilizing the concept is not about quantity, it's about desirability. More is not more.

### 3 | Differentiation & Cross Pollination

The concept is where you deviate from traditional retailers. As a lifestyle brand your concept and your concept placement within your physical space should express your brand's vision. It should be layered with any product that allows you visually tell your story. If you think a teacup and a sweater make sense together to sell your story then by all means showcase them together! The more layered and cross-pollinated (apparel, accessories and/or home products merchandised together) your product selection is within your concept the richer your story will be.

### 4 | Placement Considerations

When determining vignette placement you must keep in mind the potential for change. As the nature of lifestyle retail is to create an evolving communication between brand and consumer it is important to set up an initial structure that affords quick and easy changes to be made as needed.

- What vignette/concept placement works best within your physical space?
- What story does the vignette placement tell your customer?
- How do the vignettes flow from one to the next?

## THE BLUEPRINT



### 5 | Fixture, Forms & Furniture

Not only do you want to control how the brand's narrative unfolds to the customer you also want to encourage engagement with the product. Therefore choose appropriate fixtures and furniture to establish a strong structure for the customer experience. More specifically, always consider what fixtures will best support the overall narrative of the store and enable you to get the most out of each product presentation. Most importantly, as you move fixtures around during floor sets continually reassess the views and paths you are creating to ensure they are presenting the best brand narrative to your customers.

#### **Round fixtures and furniture:**

Are welcoming and easy to navigate. They encourage approach, interaction and circular movement. It is best to merchandise these fixtures in the round for premium shopability.

*Tip: Use an assortment of products to create a strong table narrative. A tabletop T-stand can be placed on the table for hanging while the surface is idea for folded items and stacks.*

#### **Rectangular fixtures and furniture:**

Are directional in nature. They are useful when you want to change a path of circulation. Rectangular fixtures are generally merchandised with an obvious, or natural, front and back.

*Tip: Use an assortment of products to create a strong table narrative. A dress form or tabletop T-stand can be placed on the table for additional display while the surface is idea for folded items and stacks.*

#### **1-Ways:**

Are used to feature 1 item.

*Tip: Best used with longer items such as dresses, coats and robes. These fixtures group well with other fixtures to create a larger statement or pair well with a dress form to showcase the displayed product.*

#### **2-Ways (T-stand):**

Are blocking fixtures. They stop a customer's movement. They are used to show an outfit or two, like, items such as two dresses with the same silhouette.

*Tip: Place tops on one side and bottoms on the other to show an outfit idea.*

## THE BLUEPRINT



### **4-Ways:**

Are blocking fixtures. They stop a customer's movement and are difficult to see over thus blocking store views. They are used to show two complete outfits with similar silhouettes.

### **Garment Rack (Hang Bars):**

Are good supporting fixtures. They can be used to show complete outfits or a class specific presentation.

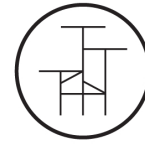
*Tip: They work well when partnered with a form or as a support fixture within a vignette.*

### **Dress Forms:**

Are good contextualizers for concept narrations and product features. They are used to showcase your best items to the customer.

*Tip: Forms can be placed individually when used as an anchor for a speedrail or piece of furniture or shown in groupings either on the floor or placed on tables to showcase outfitting and color stories. Forms also can be incorporated into display for as a lifestyle feature.*

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Nuance

When placing furniture and fixtures on the sales floor lifestyle merchants must consider even the angle of placement. Consider when an Interior Designer places a pair of chairs side by side, directly facing a sofa. What they are communicating though the furniture placement is a defined area for gathering. By having the furniture relate to each other spatially at shallow angles a designer is establishing a welcoming, conversational area. However when a designer takes those same, two chairs and turn them towards each other at a sharp angle, away from the sofa, they are defining an intimate space- a direct statement separating the chairs from the sofa. Through the careful consideration of exact placements lifestyle merchants, like Interior Designers, have the ability to control their customers' intuitive response to the floor plan and furniture placements.

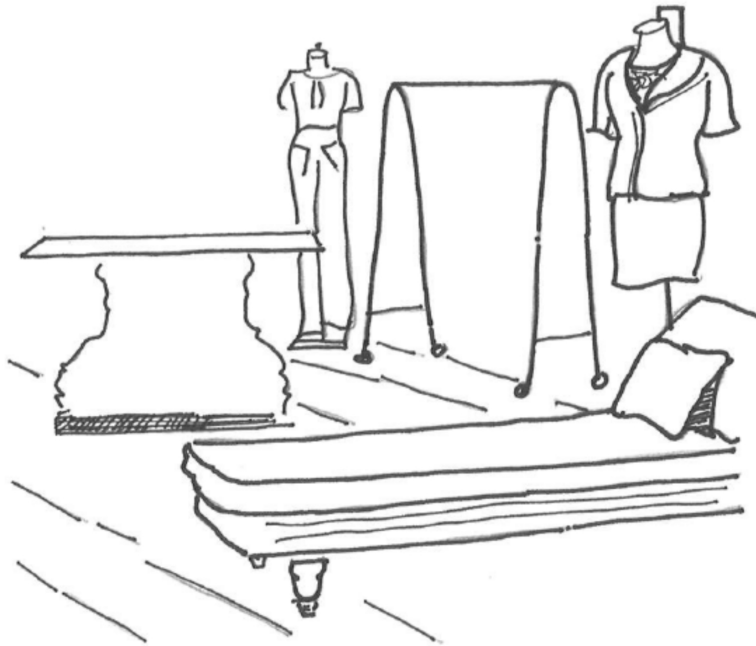


Illustration 12: Nuance in Floorplanning  
The careful positioning of fixtures creates a nuanced visual presentation.  
Example of Key Element(s): Exclusivity, Extraordinary Visual Environment, Unique Vision,  
Sense of Exploration and Individuality

## THE BLUEPRINT



# MERCHANDISING THE FLOOR

The objective of lifestyle merchandising is to create an experience that establishes an emotional connection with the customer. A good merchandiser can introduce a customer to new ideas, designs, and combinations of product purely by the method in which they display the store's product. A skilled merchant will create desire for the product they are placing. In turn product desire will lead to overall brand aspiration for the consumer. Thus merchandising is a powerful tool for a lifestyle retailer.



Illustration 13: Class Focused Merchandise Presentation

The class focused merchandise presentation creates a strong visual presentation.

Example of Key Element(s): Product Focus, Clear & Consistent Brand Communication and Wow Factor

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Product Placement

Product placement decisions have the ability to change a customer's perception of products. As a lifestyle merchant how you arrange the product is as crucial to the customer's interest in the product as where it is placed. Again, the magic of a lifestyle retail store is the connection the customer feels to both the environment and the product. As you establish the floor plan and the flow of merchandise within your store, you should simultaneously consider what product will support each narrative and drive your overall business.

#### 1 | The Narrative

As we discussed earlier the building the narrative of a lifestyle store is often the first step in planning its physical environment. This is also true for the merchandising process. Remember, your concept is the identity behind each of your vignettes. Your concepts will help you determine what product lives where within the physical store. Use your concepts to develop the personality for each section of your floor plan.

#### 2 | The Cross

Once you have identified your concepts you can begin selecting where products live. This is where you as a lifestyle merchandiser build each concept narrative- by selecting the perfect mix product categories (cross-merchandising) and displaying them together in a reflection of real life use. Cross merchandising is your key merchandising strategy! It will allow you to create interesting changes in scale, provide variety and contextualize your concept narratives. (Remember the teacup and sweater.) Product placement and the utilization of cross merchandising is one of the key differentiating elements of lifestyle retail. Always remember to utilize lifestyle presentations to communicate the identity of your brand.

## THE BLUEPRINT



### 3 | Defining Through Color

One of the most impactful elements of building a concept is creating a cohesive color story. A color story is a selection of colors displayed together to create a unique, concept identity. Color can be used to determine what product lives where and to define one concept from another. As a lifestyle merchandiser consider how colors live together about how items can be grouped together to support the overall concept narrative. By combining products through color you can create unique merchandising moments that add complexity to a visual presentations and add clarity to your floor.



Illustration 14: The Core Color Spectrum



## THE BLUEPRINT



### 4 | Presentation Styles

To achieve a dynamic merchandising presentation a lifestyle retailer commonly utilizes two, primary, merchandising techniques: lifestyle and straightforward (or traditional) presentations.

**Lifestyle** product presentation is an organic style of product placement where product is represented, as it would be used in real life. This style of presentation generally accommodates less stock levels of items and usually involves the implementation of the Principles of Design to achieve a desirable presentation. This is where lifestyle retailers distinguish themselves from their competitors and where they establish their authentic brand identity.



Illustration 15: Lifestyle Merchandise Presentation

The lifestyle presentation creates an engaging narrative of product and display.

Example of Key Element(s): Extraordinary Experience, Clear & Consistent Brand Communication, Extraordinary Visual Environment, Innovative, Unique Vision, Sense of Exploration, Emotional Connection to the Brand by the Customer and Individuality



## THE BLUEPRINT



**Straightforward**, or traditional product presentation is the arrangement of multiple quantities of an item in one, general area. Traditional merchandise presentations are ideal for very clear, simple statements of products where the addition of other styles can make the presentation too visually complicated and distracting from the importance of the primary product.



Illustration 16: Traditional Merchandise Presentation  
The massed-out presentation creates an engaging product-focused/class presentation.  
Example of Key Element(s): Product Focus

## THE BLUEPRINT



## BUILDING THE PRESENTATION

There are a number of factors to consider when placing product: What items need to have primary placement? What type of allocation is needed for each product? What product is best used in a supporting role?

Once again refer to your business evaluation to determine your strategy. Then start with your drivers or key items, which require the most space allocation. Next layer in your supporting product to build your narratives and finally fill in your statement with secondary merchandise that you own the least amount of.

### Setting a Table

There are two types of table presentations: Massed-Out (common to traditional retail) and Lifestyled.

- Massed-out statement: means you can get a lot of product onto the floor. These types of presentations are good for products that drive your business.
- Lifestyled statement: allows the customer to decompress and experience the story you are telling them.

It is important to have a balance of massed-out and lifestyle presentation throughout your store to maintain an interesting and diverse customer experience.

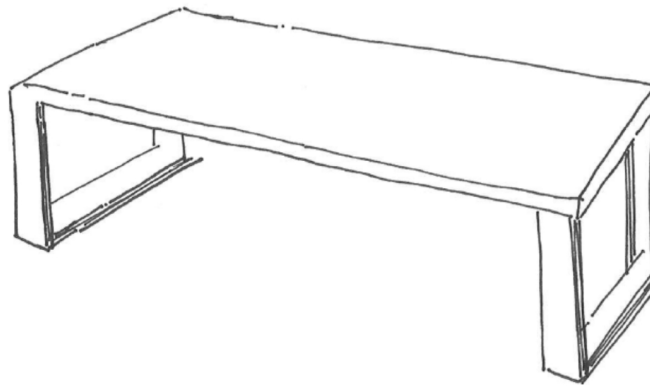


Illustration 17: The Blank Slate

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Basic Steps to Setting a Lifestyle Table

To begin you need to have on hand a selection of risers, boxes, crates and found objects that will help you build your structure along the way.

#### 1 | Clear the Surface

#### 2 | Create a Structure

Use risers to build a central structure. The easiest form to work with is the pyramid. (Your table will act as the base and you build a structure up using risers, blocks, boxes, etc. getting progressively smaller at the top.) This structure will form the skeleton of your presentation.

#### 3 | Place Drama

These elements can be found pieces, collected items or display. They often add the narrative to the presentation.

#### 4 | Layer

Layer in your merchandise – You always want a high to low flow on a table to create a pleasant visual presentation.

#### 5 | Add Complimentary Merchandise

Add a complimentary merchandise group – Add a support product that helps communicate the story you are building.

#### 6 | Add the Cross

Add a cross element – Add product from a different class to fill in your final table narrative. This is the moment where lifestyle retail truly shines. Be creative!

#### 7 | Add Display

Display is where lifestyle retail creates the important customer experience. Use display as a contextualizer or for dramatic effect. But however it is used make sure it supports your overall concept narrative and turns a good presentation into something extraordinary. (See Section 11)

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Building an Apparel Concept

There are two types of apparel presentations: Massed-Out (common to traditional retail) and Lifestyled.

- Massed-out statement: means you can get a lot of product onto the floor. These types of presentations are good for products that drive your business.
- Lifestyled statement: allows the customer to decompress and experience the story you are telling them.

It is important to have a balance of massed-out and lifestyle presentation throughout your store to maintain an interesting and diverse customer experience.



Illustration 18: An Apparel Concept  
The thoughtful mix of fixtures, form & merchandise creates an engaging concept.  
Example of Key Element(s): Extraordinary Experience, Exclusivity, Unique Vision,  
Sense of Exploration and Individuality

## THE BLUEPRINT



### **Basic Steps to Setting a Lifestyle Apparel Concept**

To begin pull items together on a rolling rack and start to build outfits. Think about your concept narrative. What is a good color story to support your narrative? What silhouettes are appropriate? Is there a key narrator piece that you can use as a starting point?

#### **1 | Tighten & Edit**

Analyze your rolling rack: is your color story clear? Do you have a good balance of pattern and solid? Edit out what is not needed or muddies up your narrative.

#### **2 | Proper Fixture Allocation**

Determine product allocation needs – make sure you give adequate support for each product you place.

#### **3 | Mark the Floor**

Begin by placing 1 of each item you pulled on the rolling rack onto your fixtures. As you do this, stand back and make sure you are combining color, texture, and pattern in a way that best expresses your narrative.

#### **4 | Evaluate**

Once all of your sample items are placed step back and evaluate the visual look of the concept. Does it have the appropriate mix of solid and pattern? Do you have the appropriate fixtures to best support your business? Can you see a clear color story?

#### **5 | Add Complimentary Merchandise**

Add the support product to help communicate the story you are building.

#### **6 | Add the Cross**

Add product from a different class to fill in your final table narrative. Bags, accessories, jewelry are all the obvious choices but think outside of the box... dishes, boxes and door knobs can all tell very interesting stories when paired with the right grouping. Be creative!

#### **7 | Add Display**

Display is where lifestyle retail creates the important customer experience. Use display as a contextualizer or for dramatic effect. But however it is used make sure it supports your overall concept narrative and turns a good presentation into something extraordinary. (See Section 11)

## THE BLUEPRINT

## BUSINESS FACTORS

**30-70% Rule**

A common equation in lifestyle retail is the 30-70 rule: 30% of your merchandise produces 70% of your sales. This equation can vary from brand to brand, for instance it could be 20-80, etc. It is important that you determine the accurate equation for your specific brand prior to beginning your lifestyle journey.

From a business perspective, this equation can help you determine what products drive the business, and from a merchandising perspective, it can help you determine what product needs significant space allocation.

**Narrators**

On the other side of the lifestyle presentation equation are "narrator" items. These items reflect the qualities, or identity, of the concepts. Although they often have less depth than business drivers they are the storytellers of your brand. The remainder of the product assortment falls in between drivers and narrators and pulls together your narratives into compelling stories. Accurately assessing your business equation prior to setting the floor is an important factor in building a balanced lifestyle presentation.

**Authenticity**

Being authentic in product collection and visual presentation are the cornerstones of your brand experience. As a lifestyle merchant you want your customer to feel connected with your product, engaged in the presentations and connect emotionally to your brand. And through your physical environment you are creating an inherently personal and distinctively identifiable experience for your consumers. This experience not only communicates your brand identity but also establishes a lasting impression with your customer.

## THE BLUEPRINT



## VISUAL DISPLAY

In lifestyle retail visual display encompasses anything a store does to enhance the shopper's sensory experience. For a lifestyle retailer, display is a strategy that adds context to their narratives elicits emotion from their customers and strengthens their overall lifestyle experience. Just as a lifestyle retailer utilizes Interior Design principles to execute impactful store experiences they also layer Fine Art methodologies into their environments to elevate their physical space beyond that of their traditional competitors.

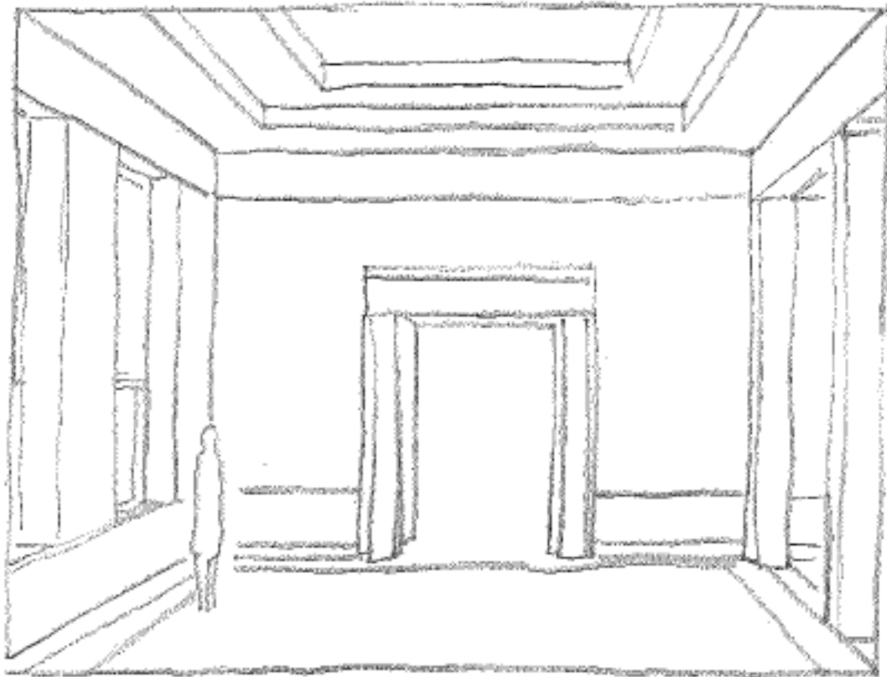


Illustration 19: Evaluation of Physical Space  
How can you use display to best affect your physical space?

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Uses

#### 1 | Adding Context

Lifestyle retailers often use art, display or installations as a tool to communicate or contextualize their brand narrative.

#### 2 | Landmarks

When used in a retail space large-scale display installations can draw in the customer's attention to a specific area, moving them from presentation to presentation. They can also provide identifiable landmarks within the physical store that helps to orient a customer within the environment.

#### 3 | Market Differentiation

Studies have shown that modern-day consumers consider traditional retailers challenged by the following aspects:

- Lack of originality
- Lack of adventure
- Lack of uniqueness
- Lack of empathy
- Unmemorable experience
- Can not evolve to stay relevant

How can you utilize display to create unimaginable experiences for your customers? And how can that display work with your concepts to build and clear and inspiring brand narrative?



## THE BLUEPRINT



### Installation

The first visual strategy distinctive to the lifestyle retail experience is the use of display installation. Studies have shown customers contribute the following elements as distinctive to this strategy:

- Provides a distinctive vision
- Elicits emotion
- Provides a sense of exploration
- Establishes a sense of individuality
- Innovative
- Provides a wow factor

### Three Display Categories:

- Installations that have no product involved
- Installations that are integrated with product
- Surface finishes and backdrops

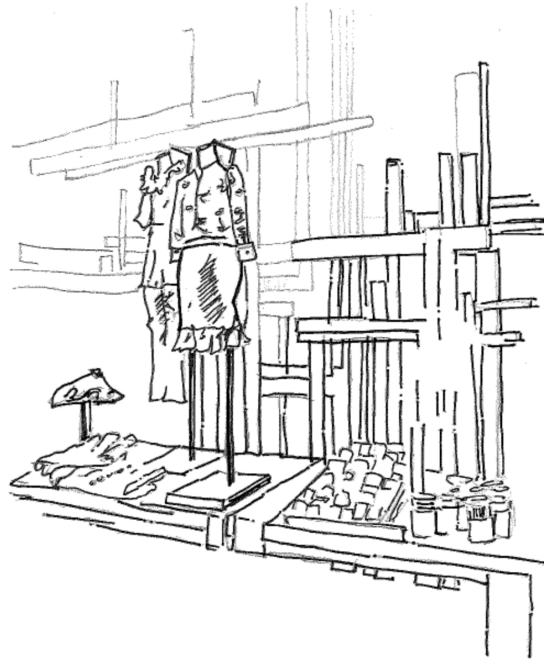


Illustration 20: Display as Structure  
 Display is used as the structure for a merchandise presentation.  
 Example of Key Element(s): Wow Factor, Innovative, Unique Vision and Individuality

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Display Placement considerations:

- Spaces that encourage customer engagement
- To reinforce concepts and brand narratives
- Windows

*Note: Windows are like packaging.*

*A customer is unlikely to initially purchase a product if they find its packaging unappealing. Window presentations have the ability to attract attention and bring the customer into the store. A Lifestyle retailer's window displays should both inspire the shopper and effectively communicate their brand identity.*



Illustration 21: Display as Context

Display is used to create context in an engaging narrative of product.

Example of Key Element(s): Innovative, Unique Vision, Individuality, Extraordinary Sensory Experience/Response for the Customer and Emotional Connection to the Brand by the Customer

## THE BLUEPRINT



### **Sensory**

Although consumers experience environments primarily through visual input, lifestyle retailers utilize multi-sensory information to build a holistic consumer-brand connection. Think of the aesthetic experiences derived from sight, touch, movement, smell, sound and taste. These sensory cues trigger associations in consumers that enhance their emotional experience within an environment. Lifestyle retailers recognize that by harnessing the associations their customers intuitively experience through sensory input they can craft a physical space that positively affects the consumer experience. When done correctly sensory messaging is far more influential in establishing brand identification than any one product alone can be.

#### **1 | Sight**

Sight is largely considered the dominant sense. Through sight we interpret our surrounding environment and store cognitive information that triggers both logical and emotive responses. Visual cues allow us to interpret color, light, form and space. Sight is the first opportunity a lifestyle retailer has to communicate their brand identity to the consumer. It is the single most indispensable component in the creation of a successful physical environment.

#### **2 | Sound**

Auditory cues fill our day, from the personal experience of music to the sounds created by products in movement. Sound has the ability to affect emotional response in consumers. Thus positive or negative associations a customer has towards a particular auditory cue may be transferred directly to the store itself. For instance music is often considered a key component in helping build a lifestyle brand. Retailers can use music to engage their customers and reinforce their identity. They can also use music to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

#### **3 | Touch**

Touch-oriented sensations are essential to a multi-sensory retail experience. From an early age we learn to experience environment through touch. This process allows us to store impressions that support our visual perceptions of texture. An overwhelming percentage of shoppers consider how a product feels to be the most important consideration when making a purchase. Thus the tactile qualities of product and packaging can not only help to differentiate a brand from its competitors but also are essential in affecting the customer experience.

## THE BLUEPRINT



### **4 | Scent**

Olfactory cues are a vital component to the aesthetic experience of the environment. Studies have indicated that the presence of a pleasant scent often enhances a consumer's perception of the brand, product and environment. In fact, environment fragrancing is a growing trend in enhancing the consumer experience in specific environments such as retail, spas, theaters, offices and hotels. And, like music, scent has the ability to evoke memory. Successful olfactory cues should be considered to support an environment that entices consumers to shop.

### **5 | Kinesthesia**

The aesthetic sensation of movement through a physical environment is an important consideration in sensory branding. For instance a successful store design should enhance the customer's exposure to merchandise while carefully choreographing their movements through the physical space. Consequently, how the customer moves through the store directly impacts the consumer behavior and their willingness to engage with the brand.

## THE BLUEPRINT



### Creating Display

So now that we understand what display is, how do we get you to a point where you can create it in your own store environment? There are a few possibilities.

#### 1 | Start Small

One idea is to start small. Display can be handwritten signage to explain a product detail, a planted pot of blooming seeds, a handmade fixture, or even a tabletop sculpture you have crafted out of collected objects. Display can be anything that helps you build the story behind your concepts. It is size and scale independent.

#### 2 | Inspiration + Planning

Another suggestion is to map out the areas on your floor plan where you think display would be most effective. (Remember the discussion about display intention.) Again, display can be large or small. It can be incorporated into your windows or nestled onto a wall. Look through magazines, art books or take a day trip to a museum. Get inspired before you start to physically create.

#### 3 | Display Artists

Lastly, many larger lifestyle retailers use in-house display coordinators or employ fine artists, builders and sculpture artists to craft their installations. However this does come with a financial consideration and only you can assess what is right for your company. What ever the right fit is think of display as a way to bring your store to life. It should always be thoughtful, impactful, moving and inspiring for the customer.

## THE BLUEPRINT



### **Extraordinary Experience**

The third strategy behind the lifestyle retail experience is turning the ordinary shopping practice of traditional retail into an extraordinary lifestyle experience. Although the “specific” experience is largely dependent on the given lifestyle retailer the commonalities of the lifestyle retail experience lies in the retailers ability to connect emotionally with their customers.

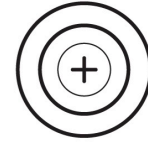
### **Building Brand Connection**

When used well, display can inspire emotion in your customer. They receive subtle cues from music and scent that enhances the emotional connection they feel toward your brand.

### **Transforming the Experience**

A successful lifestyle retailer must have working knowledge of the visual skills necessary to effectively execute such a transformative physical environment in order to fully connect with the customers. And it is the connection between a lifestyle retailer and their customers that is key differentiator between them and their traditional competitors. This strategy will allows your brand to move beyond the basic challenges of selling goods and into the business of selling your lifestyle!

## THE BLUEPRINT



## PRODUCT FOCUS

It is important to state that however we slice it, the bottom line is we are in the business of selling merchandise. What you sell matters! Studies suggest that your product selection and product focus maintains great significance to the overall success of your lifestyle environment.

**Selling Your Lifestyle**

Your product focus is not only important to your customer but it also reinforces the overall lifestyle that you are selling. In fact, studies also find that your product assortment heightens your brand's desirability.

**Customer Experts**

As a lifestyle retailer always remember that you are not single category experts; rather, you are customer experts and your objective is to deliver your customer a product assortment that defines your brand and offers an identifiable lifestyle to your customers.

## THE BLUEPRINT

# SUMMARY

Lifestyle retailers turn the ordinary retail experience into an extraordinary event. By combining unimaginable physical environments, exceptional customer experiences, and innovative product focus lifestyle retailers surprise and delight their customers with extraordinary visual presentation and a unique brand vision.

### **Experience Driven Retail**

As a lifestyle retailer you have the ability to bridge the gap between today's consumers and their desired experience by creating a physical environment that encourages interaction between your customer, your product and your space. Your store environment is what elevates you from the competition. Remember that! And unlike traditional retail environments you want customers to become a part of your brand narrative. How you plan and design your space is imperative to the success of your overall customer experience.

### **Be Authentically You**

Never lose site of your authenticity, in both your product collection and your visual presentation, as they are the cornerstones of your identity. Utilize an organized strategy to execute your space while referring to the design principles as your guide. If you do this you will have the foundation for a balanced and dynamic visual presentation that will effectively set you apart from your competitors while skillfully selling your lifestyle to consumers!



## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Independent brick and mortar retailers are fighting for survival. In just the last decade, the industry has been hit with several challenges, including recession, consolidation, increased competition and declining foot traffic, to name a few. And though there remains a vast and vibrant consumer culture, the global reach of the Internet along side the explosion in online shopping, has caused a dramatic shift in consumer-purchasing behaviors. Consumers now have unfettered access to consumption without the requirement of *going* shopping. They have grown accustomed to the deep discounts of warehouse giants like *Walmart*, as well as the conveniences of its online counterpart, *Amazon*. And as personal consumption rises the retail sector continues to lose jobs<sup>1</sup>.

The outcome to this dynamic consumer-spending shift is many independent brick and mortar retailers are faced with the growing questions of how to survive within a retail culture that has become increasingly obscure and how to re-establish relevancy against a backdrop of ever-evolving consumer patterns and practices.

The strongest consumer brands do this naturally. *Ralph Lauren*, *Apple*, and *Anthropologie*. Each of these merchants is distinctive and the experience of their brand, from their products to their physical store space is unique. By utilizing the practice of lifestyle retail each brand has created a unique platform from which they sell their lifestyle to loyal consumers. Moreover, the utilization of this experience-driven model

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<sup>1</sup> See Derek Thompson's *Where Did All the Retail Jobs Go?* for an insightful analysis of this trend.

has given each of these brands a marketable separation between themselves and their more traditional, retail counterparts.

It is the research hypothesis that if these retailers approach the execution of their physical space with the methodologies used in the Interior Design profession they will give themselves a competitive advantage over their traditional competitors. This includes possessing a core understanding of Interior Design principles and fundamentals of Sensory Design. This enables the merchant to effectively plan and structure an interior space that meets the needs of a changing, experience-driven, consumer market.

The proposed solution is a blueprint for independent brick and mortar retailers to utilize on their journey to becoming lifestyle retailers. In it we explain the methodologies behind the practice of lifestyle retail and the importance of connecting personally with consumers through creative product placement, merchandise strategies and visual display. The objective of the blueprint is to provide independent brick and mortar merchants the tools they need to create experience-driven, physical store environments that encourage interaction between their customers and their brand. The primary goal is to turn their physical store space, which has become an Achilles heel to many independent brick and mortar retailers, into a competitive advantage that not only separates them from their industry counterparts, but also strengthens the opportunity for merchandising success. And, in the process, turns an ordinary shopping experience into something that entices, informs and entertains.

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